MONTEZUMA

EDWARD EGGLESTON

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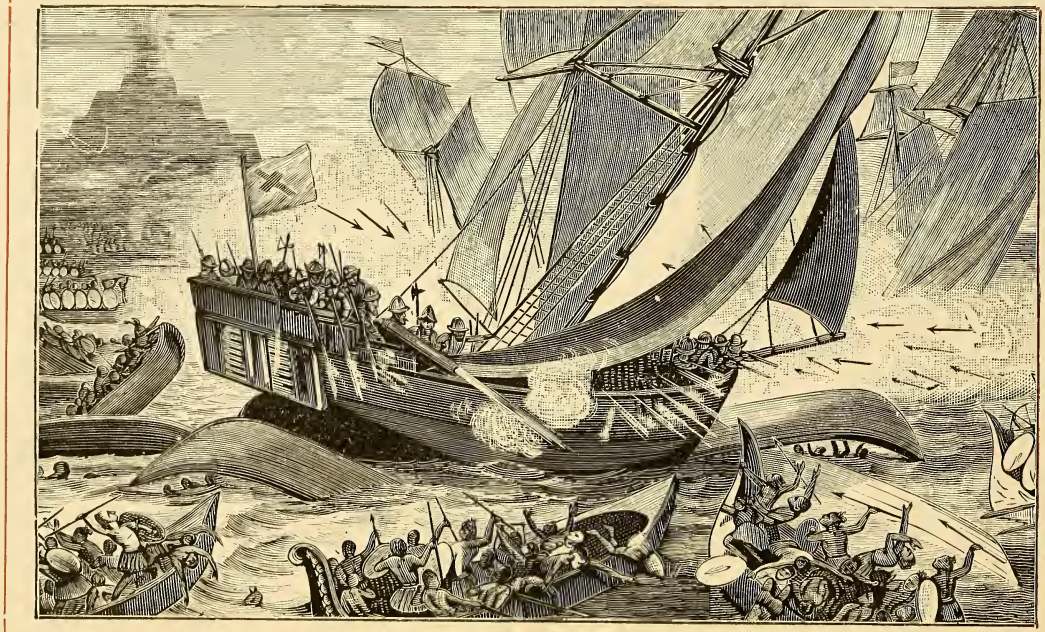

FAMOUS AMERICAN INDIANS.

MONTEZUMA

AND

THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO.

BY

EDWARD EGGLESTON

AND

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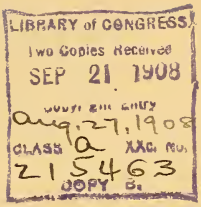

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PREFACE.

THE despatches of Cortes and the narrative of Bernal Diaz, himself a participant in the war of the conquest, have been our chief authorities, for the facts of this history. We have consulted all the principal works on the subject, but these two eye-witnesses must always be the main source of information.

THE AUTHORS.

CHAPTER I.

MONTEZUMA'S KINGDOM.

WHILE in the eastern hemisphere, he who imagined the possibility of reaching land beyond the mysterious atlantic, was deemed but a visionary dreamer, civilization had flourished, fallen and sprung up again in the western world. Already the wonderful ruins of an ancient American civilization had been overgrown by old forests, and the builders of them were forgotten by the people of Montezuma's day. While Columbus, ignorant of the extent of the globe, and of the great continent which lay between him and Asia, believed that he had but discovered a passage to the East Indies, more than one American monarch was extending and consolidating a kingdom which bade fair to last for ages. The gentle savages of the West Indian Archipelago were soon subjugated by the Spanish sword and were easily ground by cruel Spanish avarice, but the great Gulf of Mexico hid for a time the mainland from the settlements upon the Islands.

Within Montezuma's country were all the climates of the various zones. Along the seacoast is a wide tropical belt, known as the "hot countries,"—Mexico's garden of fruits. But as one travels inland, the country rises to high and still higher tablelands, the change in vegetation marking the change in climate, until one reaches the temperate region. Above this rise the great mountain peaks, some of them higher than any mountain in Europe, fringed with pines and finally crowned with eternal snow. Far inland, more than seven thousand feet above the sea, lay the beautiful valley of Mexico, some sixty miles in length and forty in breadth, surrounded by a high wall of mountains, guarded by a great volcano, ornamented with woods, fertile cornfields and flower-gardens, sparkling with lakes and thickly dotted with white cities and towns. Again the tablelands descend, but more abruptly, to the Pacific ocean.

In the midst of the valley stood Mexico, Montezuma's own native city and the capital of the country. Ancient Mexico has been styled "the Venice of the new world." It was built on a small island in the salt water lake of Tezcuco, and connected with the mainland by great stone causeways, furnished with drawbridges, by means

of which the city could quickly be turned into a fortress. It had long outgrown the limits of the small island. Many of the buildings rested on piles in the water, and many of the streets were canals, crossed here and there by bridges and alive with busy native canoes, loaded with merchandise of every sort. For a horse's hoof had never clattered on the smooth pavements of Mexico, and the canoe was the only vehicle seen in her streets. The ruins discovered far outside the limits of the Mexico of to-day, prove that Montezuma's capital was a very large city. The plainer buildings were mere huts of adobe or sun-dried brick, and most of the streets were narrow, but several great avenues ran through the city, ornamented with palaces, gardens and temples, and widening here and there into great public squares. The huts of the poorer class were white-washed, the temples and finer buildings were frequently covered with a hard, polished stucco, which glistening in the sun, at a little distance, gave the city the appearance of a city of silver.

An absolute monarch gathers around him every luxury. Each successive Mexican king had sought to aggrandize his reign by the building of some new palace or some loftier temple. Montezuma required all his nobles and tributary princes

to live for a part of the year at the capital. Thus the great central avenue of the city was lined with the palaces of the nobles. The buildings of ancient America were never lofty. They rested upon terraces or mounds, were low and rambling, surrounding inner courts, and decorated with porticoes of porphyry and jasper. The terraces were always gay with flowers, sometimes the roofs of the houses were covered with gardens, like the famous hanging gardens of Babylon. Every house was a fortress, the flat roof surrounded with walls and turrets for defense.

Mexico was supplied with sweet water by means of a great aqueduct which fed the fountains and baths of the palaces, and in which openings were made, where the water could be procured and carried in canoes to every quarter of the city.

The most curious thing in all the City of Mexico was the great temple. It stood in the centre of the city, and was surrounded by a stone wall carved with figures of serpents, and known as "the wall of serpents." There were four great gates in this wall, which opened upon the principal avenues of the city. Like all Mexican temples, this structure was built in the shape of a pyramid of pebbles and earth, covered with

hewn stone. It was divided into five stories, each story being smaller than the one below · thus leaving successive platforms around the edifice. The pyramid was ascended by staircases at one of the angles. Each staircase communicated with a platform, and one was forced to walk entirely around the pyramid to reach the next stairway above. In times of religious celebration the processions of priests, winding around and around the sides of the immense temple in the sight of all men, added greatly to the impressiveness of the ceremony. On the top of the temple was a great paved platform, at one end of which, stood two towers containing two great idols. Here also were two altars where burned perpetual fires. At the opposite edge of the platform, was the terrible stone of sacrifice, a block of solid jasper where human victims, mostly prisoners of war, were offered up. There, too, was a great drum made of serpent skins, which gave forth a terrible wailing noise heard for miles around when it was struck on extraordinary occasions.

Within this strange city, moved the busy throngs of copper-colored inhabitants, clad according to the wealth and position of the wearer, in robes of gay cotton, or in garments of a coarse

fabric, made of the fibres of the magney, or century plant, which is falsely believed to bloom only once in a hundred years. Lake and canals were dotted with the busy canoes which carried on the commerce of a large city. Here and there upon the lake were seen floating islands, blossoming with flowers and fruit. These were a sort of raft of reeds and roots, made by the economical natives who drew up the rich soil from the bottom of the shallow lake, and thus made for themselves a small movable farm, which they shoved here and there at pleasure, and which in this sunny climate furnished them with produce to carry to the great market of Mexico. One of the staple products of this lovely country was flowers, for the natives were, and are to this day, great lovers of flowers and, strange to say, offerings of flowers went side by side with human sacrifice in the worship. From Mexico come many of their most brilliant plants, cultivated in the greenhouses of Europe and America, to-day.

Great revenues poured into Mexico from remote provinces. The many cities and numerous petty territories subject to the Mexican king were taxed in the products of their manufactures and lands, to support the grandeur of their monarch. Chests of chocolate, loads of fine and richly-

dyed cotton robes, gorgeous feather mantles, the curious armor of the country made of thickly quilted cotton, chests of beans and maize, reams of paper made of the pulp of the magney, loaves of a fine white salt, used only by the nobles, lumps of copal which was burned for incense, copper axes, little chocolate cups made of turquoise stones, loads of lime, tiles of gold, bags of cochineal, bags of gold-dust, amber lip-jewels, pots of liquid amber, skins, bundles of cotton and handfuls of scarlet feathers, were some of the things which poured into the royal treasury of Mexico.

Mexico or Tenoctitlan, as it was then called, was not the only capital city within the beautiful valley. Here were two smaller kingdoms, those of Tezcuco and Tlacopan. These three kingdoms were linked together in an ancient league of friendship, and their monarchs visited back and forth from their capitals, which were but a few miles apart. But the Mexican empire reached from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and her conquests extended far south. Only one neighboring province had been able to withstand the conquering armies of the league. The little republic of Tlascala, in her mountain fastnesses, had always bid a bitter defiance to her richer and more powerful neighbors.

CHAPTER II.

MONTEZUMA.

In the centre of Mexico, facing the great temple, was a rambling pile of massive stone buildings, with numerous courts and gardens decorated with fountains and baths. Inside were spacious rooms, hung with tapestry of richly-stained cotton, carpeted with mats and rushes, and furnished with curious low stools of carved wood, and beds of thick mats with coverlets and canopies of cotton. This was the palace of the king Axayacatl, Montezuma's father, and here, in the king's harem, was born the little prince, Montezuma, about 1479. It seemed by no means certain, that the child would ever inherit the throne for, in Mexico, the kings were elected by a body of nobles. A prince had always to distinguish himself as a general, before he stood a chance of election. The choice was made from the king's brothers or nephews. The little Montezuma had both uncles and brothers between him and the throne.

Aztec parents took the greatest pains in bringing up their children. They were carefully instructed in morals and in the worship of their gods. Children were especially trained in good behavior. Years afterward, the Spaniards were struck with Montezuma's charming manners. A Mexican father would say to his boy: "When any one talks with you, listen to him attentively, and hold yourself in an easy attitude, neither playing with your feet, nor putting your mantle in your mouth, nor spitting too often, nor looking about you here and there, nor rising up frequently if you are sitting, for such actions show levity and low breeding. When you are at table do not eat greedily, nor show any disgust if you do not like anything. If any one comes unexpectedly to dinner with you, share with him what you have, and when you entertain any one, do not stare at him."

At about five years of age, well-regulated Mexican children were sent to the temple to be educated. Within "the wall of serpents," besides the sanctuaries of the idols, were extensive schools, homes for the priests, gardens and baths. The boys were instructed by priests, and the girls by matrons who devoted themselves to the service of the temple. The boys were educated in

the hieroglyphic writings of the country, taught to recite long traditional poems, instructed in the astronomical knowledge of the Aztecs, which was considerable, though like all imperfect knowledge much mixed with superstition. The girls were taught such useful arts as spinning and weaving, while both boys and girls had their particular duties in the care of the temples. The sons of the nobility swept the summit of the great pyramid, and kept the altar fires always burning. Boys of a lower station performed more menial offices, such as bringing wood for the fires, while the girls rose three times during the night to burn incense of copal, and prepared various savoury dishes, which were offered daily to the gods. Trained under the very shadow of the temple, the Mexicans from early childhood, were accustomed to the dark superstitions of their religion. Montezuma himself was especially devoted to his religion, and was educated for a priest. But among the Aztecs, the priest was more nearly connected with war than with peace. The most honored of their gods was Huitzilopotchli, the god of war. Another name for this god was Mexitli, and from him their city took its name. This god, as became his province, was fierce and blood-thirsty. His priests in their fasts and mys-

terious ceremonies, frequently cut themselves and drew their own blood to please him.

Human hearts were his especial delight. In war the Aztecs vied with each other, not in killing, but in capturing prisoners to die on the altars of Huitzilopotchli. After all, with all our horror of such a method of warfare, perhaps there was less bloodshed in this way, for it is more difficult to capture in battle than to kill. Nevertheless, in the great successes of Mexican arms, almost incredible numbers of captives were sacrificed. Again and again, triumphal armies entered the city to the music of their wild instruments, bearing with them long lines of captives. These were confined in cages. Sometimes the captives were dressed to represent the god to whom they were to be sacrificed, feasted, paid court to, provided with beautiful girls as wives, and finally at the end of a year, sacrificed. The victim was led to the sound of music by a great procession of priests clad in black robes, covered with mystic characters, their long hair clotted with the blood of their self-torture. This weird procession wound around and up the temple. The victim was made to dance before the gods. He was then thrown upon the block of sacrifice. A priest in a crimson robe inserted a sharp knife in his breast,

tore out his heart, held it up toward the sun, and then laid it upon a golden platter before the hideous symbolical figure which represented the various attributes of the god. The Aztecs worshipped the sun. Indeed their gods were innumerable. Like the savages of the north, they believed vaguely in an invisible being, whom they did not represent in their idols.

Besides the many deities, each with some particular province, whose ever-burning altars illuminated their cities at night, the Aztecs had numbers of little household gods, which they sometimes stole one from another, and which conferred favors alike upon the thief or upon the rightful owner. The Aztecs are accused by the old Spanish chroniclers of cannibalism as a religious rite. We are inclined to think that their fears exaggerated this, and that it was only practiced in cases of famine and in the ferocity of battle.

Montezuma, as became a young prince of Mexico, distinguished himself in the incessant petty wars of his war-like people. On the death of his father, two uncles were elected successively to the throne. Meantime, Montezuma entered the priesthood, and devoted himself exclusively to the service of the gods. In 1502, the last uncle having died, the next king was to be

chosen from among his nephews, of whom there were many.

The four nobles who elected kings, duly met. Montezuma had been both a successful warrior and a circumspect priest. He was very quiet and deliberate, and had especially gained the respect of his elders, by his apparent modesty. The choice fell upon him. Word was sent to the kings of the two allied powers, who, with the nobles, speedily went in search of the young prince. He was found modestly sweeping down the steps of the temple. The king of Tezcuce, Nezahualpilli, made the customary speech to the young man.

"The Mexican empire," said he, among other things, "has unquestionably attained the height of its power, as the Creator of heaven has invested you with so much authority, as to inspire all those who behold you with awe and respect. Rejoice, therefore, O! happy land that you are destined to have a prince who will not only be your support, but will by his clemency prove a father and brother to his subjects. Thou hast, indeed, a king who will not seize the occasion of his exaltation to give himself up to luxury, and lie sluggishly in bed, abandoned to pastimes and effeminate pleasures; his anxiety for thee, rather

will wake and agitate his bosom in the softest hour of repose, nor will he be able to taste food, or relish the most delicious morsel, while thy interests are oppressed or neglected."

Montezuma listened intently, and when he tried to answer his voice was choked with tears. Every one admired the humility of the young king. He now retired to the temple for a four days' fast. After this he was conducted with rejoicing to the palace, but his formal coronation did not take place as yet. This was a religious ceremony of great importance, for upon the favorable impression which a king at the outset made upon the gods depended, he thought, the prosperity of his reign. There must be sacrifices to appease the deities, and Montezuma immediately set out for war. Revolting provinces were seldom wanting, and the young king marched upon some rebels, subdued them and returned with many captives to die upon the altars of Mexico. The coronation was celebrated most magnificently, and graced with curious gymnastic games, in which the Aztecs were very expert. The Mexican crown which Montezuma now wore, was shaped like a mitre and made of gold and brilliant feather-work.

The Aztecs were sadly mistaken in reckoning

on the humility of their young monarch. Never had Mexican king, it is said, lived so grandly and formally. He allowed none but nobles to serve him, and of these he had a great retinue. Some six hundred lords also waited on him in his palace every day. They remained at the king's command in an ante-chamber, while their respective retinues filled up the three courts of the palace. No one dared enter the presence of the king, until he had removed his shoes, and thrown over his dress a coarse gown of the magney fibers, in token of respect. Only the members of the royal family were allowed to present themselves in rich costume. All who entered the royal presence bowed, touched the hand to the ground and then brought it to the head, saying, "Lord." A second time they bowed and exclaimed, "My lord," and a third time crying, "Great lord." They spoke to the king in a low voice, keeping the head drooped forward. He usually answered them through one of his attendants, and when they left the audience room they backed out, for it would have been a mark of disrespect to turn the face away from the king in leaving.

Montezuma's harem was filled with great numbers of Aztec beauties. They each had their

apartments, and whiled away their time in spinning and weaving. Their favorite embroidery was the working of pictures upon cloth with the gorgeous plumage of their birds. The king's wives were guarded by aged women, who saw to their proper deportment.

Here, as in all warm climates, the bath was greatly enjoyed. The king refreshed himself in his bath at least once every day, and changed his robes four times a day. Like Queen Elizabeth, he never wore the same dress a second time, but he gave it to his noble attendants, instead of hoarding it.

Montezuma kept his royal person particularly sacred. He dined alone in a great hall. Before the low seat upon which he gave audience, was placed a large cushion as a table. This was spread with the most delicate of cotton web, along with which were fresh towels and napkins of the same material. Around Montezuma was drawn a carved and gilded screen, that even the eyes of the noble attendants might not look too curiously on the king while he ate. His dishes were of the finest earthenware which his people made, and these were never used a second time, but immediately given away. Montezuma had also a service of gold, but this was only used in

some of his religious rites in the temple. The cups from which the king drank his chocolate, the delicious beverage of the country, of which he was very fond, were of gold or curious sea-shells. An immense number of dishes were brought in by young nobles, and set upon the matted floor. The meats were in chafing dishes, containing coals that they might be kept hot. There were numerous kinds of fish and fowl. Turkey was the commonest meat of the country. Fresh fish and fruits had been brought within twenty-four hours from the tropical lands along the seacoast, by means of a system of swift runners with relays, which the king had upon his principal road Maize was the flour of the country, and from this, with the use of eggs, various delicate wafers and concoctions were made.

The young noblemen, on setting down the dishes, had immediately retired to an ante-chamber where they dined. The king remained, accompanied only by four of the most beautiful women from his harem, his carver and six councillors. The women brought the king water to wash his hands. Montezuma then pointed with a rod to the dishes that pleased him best. The rest were carried out for the nobles to dine upon, and the door, which was usually a swinging mat,

with little bells hung upon it, to give notice of ingress or egress, was carefully closed lest the king should be seen. The women remained standing in attendance. The councillors also stood at a distance with averted eyes, and said nothing unless the king addressed them a question. During the meal, Montezuma sometimes listened to a performance upon the rude musical instruments of his country, and sometimes entertained himself with some deformed men whom he kept, as European monarchs did their dwarfs and jesters.

When the king had finished his meal, he smoked tobacco, mixed with liquid amber, a substance extracted from trees. After dinner he took a nap, and was then ready to give audience to those who might wish. He was sometimes entertained by songs, descriptive of the war-like deeds of his ancestors, and sometimes saw athletic sports. When he moved from his palace, it was reclining upon a gorgeous litter, carried by his nobles and covered with a rich canopy. Such litters are yet used in Mexico as a mode of travelling. When this royal litter passed, followed by a long retinue, every one stood still and bowed his eyes.

Montezuma was not satisfied with his father's

palace. He built him a new and a grander one. It was an extensive building of stone, its courts cooled by splashing fountains, its long, low rooms ceiled with carved cedar and other sweet-scented woods.

One of the curious fancies of this king was an immense aviary in which were assembled all the sweet-singing and gay-plumaged birds of the country as well as birds of prey. They had a great number of faithful attendants who studied to supply them with their favorite food and were careful to collect every bright feather which they let drop, for use in feather-embroidery. The birds of prey occupied a separate building, and it is even stated that as many as five hundred turkeys were fed daily to these creatures. There was also a collection of wild animals, serpents and reptiles.

Around Montezuma's palace were gardens carefully cultivated, decorated with fountains and tanks of fish surrounded with a marble pavement and hung with light canopies of gay cotton, making a pleasant retreat on sultry days. He had also various pleasure grounds, woods for his own hunting and more than one palace out of the city. His favorite retreat was the hill of Chapultepec from whose summit of porphyry is a

beautiful view of the surrounding country. Here were groves of ancient cypresses, to this day standing. Every one of the royal buildings, though some were seldom visited, were kept perfectly clean, for Montezuma was very partial to neatness. It is said that he employed a thousand men in cleaning the streets of Mexico so that one might walk in the city with as little danger of soiling one's feet as one's hands.

Montezuma was very princely in his alms. When he chose to give, his gifts were always magnificent. He was very lavish toward the poor of his own city and neighborhood. But, to support the magnificence of his own living and his host of attendants, the remote and more recently conquered provinccs were grievously taxed. To them Montezuma was a hard and dreaded taskmaster. Thus, like many another monarch, had he undermined the foundations of his kingdom.

Strange to say, the Aztecs seem to have had some traditional prediction of the coming of a people from over the ocean—connected with their idol, Quetzalcoatl, god of the air. They believed that he had once lived upon earth as a man, and that, under his dispensation, corn grew to such an immense size that one ear was a load for a man, and cotton grew already dyed. He

was believed to have been benignant and wise, but he finally went to the sea coast, and there disappeared, promising some day to return with his descendants. This tradition seems strongly to have affected the minds of the Mexicans and they were looking for a speedy fulfilment of it.

Perhaps rumors had reached Mexico of the dominion of white men upon the West Indies. At any rate, strange omens are said to have thrown a gloom over the glory of Montezuma's reign. For instance the Lake of Tezcuco suddenly and apparently without cause became agitated, rose over its banks and flooded Mexico, so that many buildings were destroyed. A tower of the great temple at another time mysteriously took fire. Comets and a strange blaze of light was seen in the east, while low rumblings are said to have been heard. Montezuma, filled with undefined dread, sent to his neighbor, King Nezahualpilli, who was versed in astrology, for an interpretation of these mysterious omens. The astrologer pronounced it the forerunner of future disasters through the arrival of a new people. Montezuma was unwilling to accept this interpretation. Nezahualpilli, according to a custom of the country, challenged him to a royal game of ball. If Montezuma succeeded, the prophecy

should be pronounced false, but if the prophet succeeded, it would undoubtedly prove to be true. This game was played in an inclosure guarded by two idols, the gods of game, and thus like everything else in their life was interwoven with superstition. The balls were made of elastic gum, and so much was this game played that thousands of balls are said to have been paid to Montezuma yearly as tribute from the districts where they were made. In playing, the ball could only be struck with the thigh, arm or elbow and never with the hand or foot. Every time a player hit the surrounding wall with the ball he counted one. In the centre of the play ground were two large stones, resembling mill-stones with holes in the centre, but little larger than the ball. It was an extraordinary thing to be able to knock a ball through these holes, but, if a player succeeded, it won him the game, and was moreover a great event in his life. The two kings played this singular game, and Nezahualpilli won, much to the chagrin of Montezuma.

In 1518, news reached the king of some strange vessels, touching and exploring along the coast. Thus the fore-shadowing of some future event darkened with mysterious dread the

life of the absolute monarch. Helplessly, never thinking that he could in any way ward off the coming catastrophe, did Montezuma await what time should unfold

CHAPTER III.

HERNANDO CORTES.

HERNANDO CORTES was born at Medellin, in Spain, in the year 1445. His father was a captain of infantry, and both his father and mother were of good family. He was a scapegrace of a youth. His father tried to make a lawyer of him, but, to the great disappointment of his parents, he returned from school after two years, having learned but little. Hernando wanted to be a soldier, or more properly speaking, an adventurer. The wondrous, unknown, new world opened an ample field for all daring spirits. The risks were great, but the prizes were large. Perhaps an unknown death, perhaps an immense fortune. Like many another wild boy, Cortes was willingly packed off to America by his puzzled friends.

Nicholas de Ovando was about sailing with a fleet, to take the government of Hispaniola. Cortes was to have gone with him, but in one of the latter's numerous love affairs, while scaling a

wall at night to seek an interview with a lady, the wall fell with him, and he received injuries which kept him in bed until after the sailing of the armament.

For two years more Cortes stayed in Spain, and finally sailed with another squadron bound for the West Indies, in 1504. Quintero, the captain of the vessel in which Cortes had sailed, with the unscrupulousness of sea-faring men in his day, planned to get ahead of his companion ships, that he might anticipate them in trade at San Domingo. The fleet touched at the Canaries.

While they were in harbor, Quintero slipped secretly out in the night. He speedily returned, however, for he was attacked by a furious storm and forced to put in for repairs. The fleet waited for him, and finally they all sailed together. Nevertheless, as they neared America, Quintero again stole away in the night. Again he was attacked by head winds and storms. The vessel was nearly wrecked, and in the danger young Cortes is said to have shown, for the first time, that courage which was one of the great traits of his character. After many weary, stormy days in which the captain was heaped with indignant reproaches, a white dove lit upon the vessel, and she soon made port to find the other vessels

already there, and their cargoes sold. Cortes hastened ashore, and immediately sought the home of the governor, who was absent.

"You will find no trouble in obtaining a liberal grant of land," said his secretary.

"But I came to get gold, not to till the soil like a peasant," cried the young man.

After all, however, gold was not to be picked up even in the new world, and the road for fresh adventure was not always open. Cortes was persuaded to settle down to the management of a large grant of land, with the accompanying Indian slaves. He now and then joined Ovando's lieutenant, Diego Velasquez, in cruel military expeditions, against insurgent natives. Thus the young adventurer served an apprenticeship in Indian warfare, which was of use to him in the future. He was fortunately prevented by an abscess in the knee, from embarking on Nicuesa's unhappy voyage to the mainland.

The restless young soldier was only too glad to accompany Velasquez, when he undertook the conquest of the island of Cuba. When the unhappy natives were finally subjugated, and Velasquez appointed governor of Cuba, Cortes received an office under him. They both soon became interested in a family of beautiful sisters, who had

settled upon the island. Cortes fell in love with one of them, named Catalina Xuarez. It is said that he promised to marry her, but delayed to do it. The governor who was attached to her sister, attempted to force the marriage, but Cortes remained obstinate. Whether this story be true or not, Cortes certainly fell out with Velasquez, and is said to have joined a party of malcontents, who were for various reasons dissatisfied with the governor. They held secret meetings at the house of Cortes. Here it was determined to send their complaints to the authorities at Hispaniola. With his usual fearless courage, Cortes undertook the dangerous passage of an intervening arm of the sea, in an open boat, that he might deliver the despatches. Before he started, however, Velasquez discovered the plot, and Cortes was seized, fettered and thrown into prison. It is even said that the governor would have hung him, had not his friends interposed. The young rebel finally contrived to loosen his fetters. He then forced a window with his irons, and having let himself down from the second story of the building in which he was imprisoned, he fled to a church, where he claimed the right of sanctuary.

Velasquez was enraged, but he dared not vio

late the sanctity of the church. He lay in wait however, hoping to catch the fugitive unawares. Cortes one day stood carelessly in front of the church, when three men suddenly sprang upon him, and again made him prisoner. He was now taken on board a vessel, which was to sail in the morning for Hispaniola, where he was to be tried. With great difficulty, Cortes succeeded that very night in passing his feet through the shackles. It was very dark, and he cautiously slipped upon deck and dropped into a boat that lay below. He pushed quietly off, but as he neared the shore, the waves became too rough for his little bark. He jumped out, and after a long battle in the surf, succeeded in reaching the beach, where he again fled for refuge to the friendly church. Here he made up his mind to marry Catalina Xuarez, and thus her family was brought to interfere in his behalf.

The story is told that Velasquez was in the interior on a military expedition. He was one evening alone, when Cortes suddenly appeared before him fully armed. Startled, the governor asked the meaning of this. After a hot discussion the two men became reconciled, embraced, and when a messenger arrived in great haste to inform Velasquez of the escape of his enemy,

they were actually found sleeping in the same bed. Whether in this dramatic way or not, Velasquez and Cortes were certainly reconciled and the latter married Catalina.

Cortes now became the master of a large plantation with the accompanying slaves, and was appointed to the office of magistrate. He also employed the slaves in digging gold, and in a short time had gained several thousand castellanos. "God alone knows at the cost of how many Indian lives," adds an old chronicler who was in advance of his time and people, in a hatred of slavery. Cortes, however, had no desire to be better than others. He thus spent a few quiet years in company with his wife "with whom he lived just as happily," he said, "as though she had been the daughter of a dutchess.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SAILING OF THE ARMADA.

VELASQUEZ, is said to have been "covetous of glory, and somewhat more covetous of wealth." A viceroy of a viceroy, he in his turn authorized voyages of gain and discovery into the more western regions. Cordova had sailed in 1517, and discovered Yucatan, where he was astonished with the remarkable remains of a very ancient civilization, which are a wonder even to this day, but which he ascribed to the people then living there. He was everywhere met with a deadly hostility, for the terrible name of the Spaniard had preceded him. After suffering great privations and the loss of half his men, Cordova returned, only to die soon after of his wounds. But he had brought back with him ornaments of wrought gold, and this was enough to excite the avarice and ambition of the numerous adventurers who peopled the colonies of the new world.

Velasquez eagerly fitted out a little squadron

which he placed in the hands of Juan de Grijalva. Sailing from Cuba in 1518, Grijalva also touched first the shores of Yucatan. He coasted along north meeting every where with resistance until he reached one of Montezuma's sea-coast provinces. Here the cacique was anxious to get some account of the strangers which he might send to Montezuma. Grijalva landed with his entire force in order to sufficiently impress the chief. A friendly meeting ensued in which they conversed as best they might by signs. The curious baubles of civilization were traded for the toys of semi-civilization, jewels, golden ornaments and vessels of gold. Thus the news first reached Montezuma of the appearance upon his borders of white men with thick beards, in wondrous ships.

Grijalva sent the treasures in a caravel back to Cuba, and continued his exploring voyage somewhat further along the coast. Meanwhile, great was the excitement in Cuba on the arrival of the rich cargo. When Grijalva finally reached the colony it was to be unjustly censured by the ambitious Velasquez for not planting a colony in the land of the Aztecs upon the spot, and to find a new fleet already fitting out for the purpose. Velasquez had sent his chaplain to Spain

with one fifth of the gold, the royal share, and begging permission to go on with the discoveries upon the main land. Without waiting, however, for this, he began to prepare for a new expedition, fearing probably lest any one else should be before him. The governor now looked about him for some one to take command of the fleet, and at the same time bear a share of the expense.

Here was just the opportunity which Cortes coveted. He had a warm friendship with Lares the royal treasurer and with Duero, the governor's secretary. Through their influence he got himself recommended to Velasquez as the man for the command. Velasquez well knew him to be an experienced soldier in the wild warfare of the new world, and he therefore made Cortes captain-general of the new armada.

Now indeed had Cortes reached his opportunity. He threw his heart and soul into the venture. His own fortune was freely given, he mortgaged his estates and borrowed from his friends to assist in fitting out the fleet. From this moment the life of Cortes assumed a consequence which it had not before possessed. Instead of the wild, rebellious scapegrace, he became a man with a purpose. His friends were surprised to see in him traits which they had not suspected

in the genial, pleasure-loving young adventurer. He was thirty years of age, with bright eyes and handsome face, but rather small of stature, ambitious, avaricious, and somewhat unscrupulous as to the ends he used to bring about a desirable object, and with a not uncommon incongruity, chivalrously devoted to his religion. Nevertheless, he was a remarkable leader of men, and possessed a most wonderful tact both in the management of friend and foe. There were so many incompetent actors in the colonization of the new world, that it gives the reader of history a real pleasure to turn to one man who always knew just what to do in an emergency.

Cortes soon had an opportunity to use his tact. Vain of his new position and anxious to draw recruits to him, he had begun to wear a plume and to show other signs of rank. The jealous suspicion of Velasquez was aroused. Of course the viceroy in imitation of greater lords possessed a jester. This fellow found it exceedingly funny to throw gibes at Cortes. As Velasquez and Cortes were walking one day toward the port to inspect the preparations, the fool called out.

"Have a care, master Velasquez, or we shall have to go a hunting, some day, after this same captain of ours."

"Do not listen to him," said Cortes, "he is a saucy knave and deserves a sound whipping."

But the fellow persisted in crying out now and then, "I swear that I shall go with Cortes myself, to these rich lands, that I may not see you crying, master Velasquez, at the bad bargain you have made."

Jealousy was already aroused against him Cortes saw that he was in danger of losing his command. He took great pains to keep always near Velasquez, and to show him the utmost devotion. Meantime, the preparations went rapidly forward. All was bustle in the little port of Santiago. Recruits flocked in, and nothing was talked of but the selling of lands to buy arms and horses, the quilting of the cotton mail, so serviceable in Indian warfare, and the preparing of bread and salt pork for provision on shipboard.

Some gentlemen on the island, among whom were the governor's relatives, were jealous of Cortes. They took every occasion to excite the suspicious disposition of Velasquez, and to remind him of their old feud, and of the probability that a man who had once rebelled, would be likely to take advantage of this new power. Velasquez began to regret his appointment. His manner

toward his captain-general became cold, and he told Lares and Duero, that he intended to remove Cortes. They immediately informed Cortes, who saw that the venture upon which he had risked everything, was to be ruined at the outset. He was neither entirely prepared with vessels, men or stores, but he quickly took his resolution. He went to the butcher of the town, and demanded his whole stock of meat. The man remonstrated with him, for the town would be destitute of meat for the following day. But Cortes insisted on having it, and threw down in payment a heavy gold chain which he wore around his neck. That very night the men were got quietly on board, and the little armada dropped down the bay. The town of Santiago awoke the next morning to find her much talked of fleet already getting under way. According to one story, Velasquez, informed of what had happened, sprang from his bed and having dressed himself hastily, rode down to the shore. Cortes, seeing him coming, entered an armed boat and approached within speaking distance.

"And is it thus you part from me?" cried the governor.

"Pardon me," answered Cortes, "time presses and there are some things that should be done

before they are even thought of. Has your Excellency any command?"

The mortified governor had no commands. According to the other version of the story, after having so hastily prepared, Cortes went in the night and bade Velasquez farewell, leaving him no time to make a change in the command of his fleet.

However this may be, Hernando Cortes sailed suddenly on the eighteenth of November, 1518, leaving Velasquez to the knowledge that he had appointed a most capable man to a post of trust, and had then succeeded in alienating him from his interest. He despatched letters to the commander of Trinidad, ordering him to arrest Cortes, for he was deposed from the command of the fleet, and another man had been appointed in his place. Meanwhile the fleet touched at Macaca, and Cortes helped himself to such provisions as could be procured from the royal farms, considering it, he said, as "a loan from the king."

Cortes next landed at Trinidad. He displayed his banner before his quarters. It was a red cross surrounded with blue and white flames, upon a black velvet ground, and the motto, "Let us follow the cross and in that sign shall we conquer."

Volunteers immediately flocked under this

banner. More than a hundred men who had just returned from Grijalva's expedition, resolved to set out on this new one. A number of hidalgos, or gentlemen's sons, also joined Cortes' standard, and were welcomed with music and the thunder of cannon. Many of them had horses, and he who possessed a horse was considered rich indeed. Cortes with his usual free-handedness, stripped himself of his gold jewelry, that he might buy a horse for a friend who was too poor to get one for himself.

He busied himself, meantime, in procuring the necessary stores. A trading-vessel laden with grain was announced off the coast. Cortes immediately ordered her seized, and, having bought the vessel and the cargo upon credit, persuaded the owner also to join his expedition. This man was considered the richest man in the army, as he owned a ship, a horse and a negro.

And now arrived Velasquez' despatches, ordering the arrest of Cortes. But the governor did not deem it wise to interfere with so powerful a party, lest the town itself might be overwhelmed and destroyed. Cortes finally went to Havana, desiring to get as many recruits as possible. Here he supplied his army with coats of quilted cotton, as a defense against Indian arrows. The

army was divided into companies, and officers appointed. No partiality was shown, but the friends of Velasquez were appointed equally with his own. Cortes had set about gaining over the enemies among his men with wonderful tact Diego de Ordaz, who was one of Velasquez' household, had been sent out in search of another ship, which Cortes had heard of, with orders to again join the fleet at a certain point, thus freeing the commander from an inconvenient spy at a critical moment. Letters soon reached Barba, the governor of Havana, from Velasquez, to seize Cortes and stop the fleet. But the captain-general had already gained Barba's friendship, most of the soldiers were ready to die for Cortes, and written commands were of no avail. Barba wrote to Velasquez, saying that the popularity of Cortes was so great that he dared not execute his orders, as the town would be sacked, and the inhabitants carried off by force, if he attempted it. Cortes accompanied this letter with one of his own, assuring Velasquez of his eternal devotion to his interest, and with the comforting news that he sailed the next day

CHAPTER V.

THE BATTLE OF TABASCO.

CORTES had cut the bridge behind him. He dared not return to Cuba unless it were after such a glorious success as should wipe out all past disobedience. A short but stormy voyage brought the little armada to the island of Cozumel, off the coast of Yucatan. The admiral's ship arrived last to find that the natives had already fled under the harsh treatment of Alvarado, one of the captains, who had captured several of them and robbed their temple of its trifling ornaments. Cortes was greatly vexed at this impolitic course. He immediately called before him the captives. His only interpreter was an Indian who on a previous voyage had been taken to Cuba and had thus learned a little Spanish. By this imperfect means Cortes managed to impress them with his friendliness and his desire that the natives should return. A more powerful argument was the valueless trifles with which he loaded them. The captives were

then set free, and numbers of Indians soon flocked around the Spaniards anxious to trade common gold for new and rare baubles.

It was one of the objects of this expedition to recover some Spaniards who were believed to be in captivity, the remains of a former disastrous attempt at colonization. Two vessels were now sent in search of these captives, of whom Cortes had received some accounts from the natives. Meanwhile he explored the island. He found it but scantily populated with a poor and barbarous people. But what struck him with astonishment were the houses and temples of stone which are still there, the remains of some ancient civilization of which we have no history and for which the Spaniards, of course, could not account.

The Spanish discoverers in the new world considered themselves on a crusade; they were all knights of the cross. Not the least enthusiastic in this work was Cortes. He was horrified at the sight of idol-worship among the natives, Immediately the two missionaries who accompanied him were set to work to persuade the Indians to allow their idols which were images of Satan himself to be thrown down. The natives would not listen to any such proposal, for were

not these the gods who had always sent them rain and sunshine? They assured the Spaniards that, if they attempted such a thing, the vengeance of the gods would strike them like a thunderbolt. But with Cortes, if men would not be converted by persuasion, they must be converted by force. Without further ado, he commanded the idols to be demolished. Zealous Spaniards sprang upon them and rolled them headlong down the temple stairs amid the horrified groans of their worshipers. A new altar was now hastily raised, an image of the Virgin placed over it and a crucifix erected. The two priests did what they could to enlighten the natives as to their new religion through the medium of their poor interpreter.

And now the ships sent in search of the lost Spaniards had returned without any news of them, much to the disappointment of Cortes. The fleet set sail from Cozumel, but it had been out but a few hours when one of the ships sprang a leak and the Spaniards were forced to put back to port. They had not been long in port when a large canoe was seen approaching from the shores of Yucatan. There was a man in it who was to all appearances a native, dark and almost naked, like his companions. At sight of the white men his first words were, "God,

Holy Mary, and Seville," in Spanish, and he saluted Cortes in the Indian style, by touching his hand to the ground and then to his head. He was, indeed, one of the captive Spaniards, and was received with the greatest joy by Cortes who embraced him and threw his own cloak over his bare shoulders. The man fell upon his knees to thank heaven for his deliverance. It was with difficulty that he could recall his own language. His name was Aguilar, and his story was a very curious one. He and some companions had been wrecked upon this coast eight years before. Two only of them had escaped from hardship or death at the hands of the savages. Aguilar was the slave of a cacique to whom he had made himself very valuable.

His master would hardly have parted with him, had it not been for the wondrous beads and bells which Cortes had sent by native messengers as a ransom for any of their countrymen who might be there. The other Spaniard had made himself an important man among the Indians by planning an attack which they had made upon Cordova's expedition. He had an Indian wife and children. Aguilar tried to persuade him to accompany him to Cortes' vessels.

"Brother Aguilar," said he, "I am married, I

have three sons and am a cacique and captain in the wars. Go you, in God's name; my face is marked and my ears bored. What would those Spaniards think of me if I went among them?

In other words he was a great man among the savages; among the Spaniards he would be but an object of ridicule. Aguilar went alone in search of the friendly ships, and found them gone, for they had despaired of an answer from the embassy which they had sent in search of Spaniards. Aguilar's disappointment must have been bitter, indeed, but when he heard of the unexpected return of the fleet he hastened joyfully to Cozumel. He was a most valuable acquisition to Cortes, who was sadly in need of a good interpreter.

Cortes next touched at the mouth of the Tabasco river, which he found too shallow to admit the fleet. With a part of his men he embarked in boats and the shallower vessels and began the exploration of the river. He could see the natives moving among the net work of mangrove trees which lined the bank, and was astonished to find their gestures anything but friendly. Though he had no especial interest in delaying at this spot, it was part of his policy never to appear intimidated. He encamped for

the night on an island and awoke in the morning to find the opposite banks lined with an immense concourse of savages, decked for battle. Upon the water's edge was a vanguard of canoes filled with warriors.

Cortes landed a detachment of his forces upon a narrow road which led by a roundabout way to the town. He led the remainder in boats straight up toward the Indian canoes. Then, as his orders bound him to do, he caused a pompous notice of warning to be delivered to the Indians through the interpreter. This, however, was only answered with whoops of defiance and a shower of arrows. Having relieved their consciences the Spaniards fell to work. They were soon grappling with the Indians. Both white men and savages were quickly in the water up to their middles, fighting hand to hand. The savages retired and advanced, harrassing their more cumbersome enemies who were forced to wade through very deep mud on shore. Cortes lost one of his buskins in this adventure and came out barefooted, but he gave the battle cry, "St. Iago," and the Spaniards sprang upon the Indians with redoubled vigor. They fell back behind a breastwork of timber, From this they were driven into their town. Rallying behind a barricade, the Indians now

fought fiercely. The Spaniards called on the name of their patron saint, and the savages cried "kill the chief," at the same time filling the air with their hideous yells. Just at this moment the detachment which had been sent around by land rushed upon the scene, and the combined forces soon succeeded in driving the Indians, who fought bravely as they fell back. The Spaniards captured their village, but did not pursue them further.

Cortes now gave three cuts with his sword on a great tree which stood in the centre of the town, announcing that he took possession of the place in his majesty's name, and was ready to defend his majesty's claim against any who should dispute it. This step was formally witnessed by a royal notary. Cortes' friends admired the chivalric ceremony, but the friends of Velasquez murmured. The commander now prepared his quarters for the night in the temple. He posted sentinels and took every means to guard against surprise. An ominous silence reigned in the surrounding country. The Indian interpreter, on whom Cortes had depended before the arrival of Aguilar, had fled and left his Spanish clothes hanging upon a tree. Now, indeed, Cortes was uneasy, for he knew that the

enemy would be informed of the small numbers of the Spaniards and be undeceived with regard to their supposed marvelous power.

Morning came and nothing had been seen of the enemy. Cortes sent out a detachment under Alvarado to reconnoiter. They soon came flying back with the Indians at their heels. Cortes sallied forth and drove back the pursuers, taking a few prisoners. From these he learned that the Indians were assembled in great numbers, determined on resistance. Cortes now made rapid preparations for battle. The wounded were sent on shipboard, while six cannons and the horses were landed. The animals were at first stiff from their long confinement, but a few hours exercise restored them to high spirits.

Again night came on. It was a restless night for Cortes, on the eve of the first battle of his expedition. Several times he rose and made the rounds, to see that his sentinels were all at their posts. At break of day he aroused his men, telling them that they would not wait for the enemy, but go to meet them. The command of the infantry was given to Diego de Ordaz, who was to march directly across the country to the enemy's encampment. Cortes himself, commanded the cavalry, and fetching a circuitous route

would attack the enemy in the rear. All being ready, mass was said and the march began. Plantations of Indian corn and cacao covered the intervening country, which was intersected with numerous canals, rendering the progress of the army very toilsome. The cannons were dragged over narrow causeways, and the men plunged and floundered on for several miles, until they came in sight of the dusky throng of warriors. The Indian forces were advantageously situated on a broad plain. As the Spaniards toiled slowly onward through a deep marsh, the yells of the natives arose, accompanied by showers of arrows and stones falling upon the defenceless heads of the infantry, and wounding many of them. When they succeeded in reaching firm land however, their artillery aimed at the dense, disorderly rank of Indians, mowed them down in great numbers. Still undismayed, they threw up dust and leaves to conceal their losses, and, filling the air with their wild cries, made a fierce resistance. They pressed the Spaniards close. Now they were driven back, and again their immense numbers pressed forward, for they were brave warriors, much superior to the more effeminate natives who had been easily conquered upon the islands. The Spaniards were almost overwhelmed by num-

bers. Every moment their position became more cramped, and they had not room to work their artillery effectively. Still the longed-for cavalry had made no appearance. Finally, they could see the distant Indians thrown into disorder. The agitation quickly communicated itself to the mass like a wave. The Spaniards' hearts leaped with joy as they heard the well-known battle-cry, "San Iago and San Pedro," "St. James and St. Peter." Soon they could discern the helmets of their companions glaring in the sun, as the horsemen came dashing through the Indian ranks, dealing deadly blows on all sides. The brave natives could withstand even the terror of fire-arms, but these wondrous animals with their iron feet and their gayly-armed riders, so firmly seated that they seemed a part of them, filled them with superstitious dread. The battle was won, for it needed not the charge of the infantry to dispel the foe. Cortes wisely refrained from entangling himself farther by pursuit, for he had already experienced great difficulty in reaching the battle-ground.

He released the prisoners that had been taken, with a message to their countrymen to come immediately and offer submission, or he would ride over the country and put man,

woman and child to the sword. An embassy of the Indians quickly appeared with a present of twenty female slaves for the conquerors. By the exchange of beads and bells, food and cotton were procured from the natives, with a few gold ornaments. Cortes asked them where they got the precious metal. "Mexico" was their answer.

CHAPTER VI.

DONNA MARINA.

GOLD-HUNGER was the passion of the white man who first explored the coast of the new world. Finding the precious metal so scarce at Tabasco, Cortes doubtless regretted his waste of time, the wounds of his men, of whom he had lost several, and the injuries of his horses. But, without knowing it, he had acquired something of more service to him than loads of gold.

Among the twenty female slaves presented to the conquerors, was the daughter of an Aztec cacique or chief. Her father had died when she was a child, and her mother had married another chief, by whom she had a son. Desiring to secure the inheritance to the son, they had secretly sold the girl, pretending that she was dead, and celebrating for her's, the funeral of a slave child with mock sorrow. She was carried to Tabasco where she was resold, and thus finally fell into the hands of the Spaniards. They, with the crooked piety of the day, insisted first on the baptism

of the poor girls, who were given Christian names, and then distributed by Cortes among his cavaliers. The chief's daughter was christened Marina, and fell to the share of a cavalier named Puertocarrero.

Cortes also planned to bring about a hasty conversion of the Tabascans, at the same time that the slaves were baptized. The priests who accompanied the expedition did their best to explain their religion to the natives, who were rendered docile converts by their late chastisement. The following day was Palm Sunday, and Cortes determined to celebrate it by a monster conversion. The priests led a brilliant procession of Spaniards bearing palm-branches, and followed by an immense concourse of Indians, to the large Indian temple, where an altar had been erected, and an image of the virgin and child put in place of the old idol. Mass was celebrated and the chant was sung by the Spaniards. The ceremony was doubtless very impressive to the simple minds of the natives. But they were hastily treated only to the outside, and not to the essence of religion, of which last, indeed, the Spaniards were not good examples. The conquerors, however, doubtless felt much satisfaction as they embarked for a more golden land, bearing with them the consecrated palm branches.

Marina, or Donna Marina, as she was always respectfully called, proved to be a remarkable woman. She had a fine figure, and was frank prompt and fearless. More than this, she was very intelligent and quick in learning a new tongue. Deserted of her own kindred, she devoted herself with warm affection to the Spaniards. By birth she spoke the Mexican tongue, and also learned the Tabascan, which was the only Indian language that Aguilar understood. Cortes could thus address his speech to Aguilar in Spanish, who translated it into Tabascan for Donna Marina, and she, in her turn, changed it into Mexican. By this roundabout route, the general was furnished with means of communicating with the Aztecs, without which he could not have carried out his great scheme. But Donna Marina soon learned to speak Spanish also. She was a person of great importance to the commander, who was scarcely ever seen without her. Finally, when her master returned to Spain, Cortes took her himself, and she became the mother of his son, Don Martin Cortes. After the conquest she was married to a cavalier. Accompanying one of the expeditions of discovery, in which she was still valuable, Donna Marina is said to have met her mother and half brother.

They were much terrified when they saw her, expecting to be punished for their former cruelty, but she freely forgave them, and made them a present of gold. This is, in brief, the domestic history of Donna Marina, who was destined to be the means of the downfall of her people.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SPANIARDS IN THE KINGDOM OF MONTEZUMA.

THOUGH for a year Montezuma had heard nothing of the strangers who had touched his coast, his mind was filled with vague apprehensions. He posted sentinels along the heights of the sea-coast, and ordered Teuhtlile, the cacique of the sea-coast province where Grijalva had landed, to send him a careful description of the strange beings when they returned. Accordingly, when a Spanish fleet again appeared upon the shores of Mexico in the spring of 1519, the ships had scarcely anchored before a canoe filled with natives darted forth and paddled along-side of the admiral's ship. The Indians came fearlessly on board. Cortes was greatly disappointed when he found that the dialect which Aguilar had learned bore little resemblance to the Mexican tongue, and it was then that he discovered Donna Marina's importance. Some one informed him that there was a woman among the slaves who understood Mexican. By the combination of the

two interpreters the commander was soon conversing freely with the natives. They told Cortes that they were subjects of a great king, called Montezuma, or as it was properly pronounced by the Indians, Moc-theu-zoma. Their king, they said, lived in the tablelands of the mountains, some seventy leagues in-land. Their province was a recent conquest of this great king and their local cacique, Teuhtlile, lived about eight leagues away. Cortes told them that he had come on a friendly mission and wished to see their cacique. He did not forget to inquire for gold. They answered that there was a great deal of it in the interior.

Enough had now been discovered to induce the Spaniards to remain. They landed on the following day on the dreary, sandy beach where the modern city of Vera Cruz now stands. The Spaniards immediately set to work to make them a shelter from the burning tropical sun. They planted stakes in the ground on which they built a roof of branches covered with the mats and cotton cloth which the friendly natives brought them. Their fame spread far and wide in the neighboring country and the natives flocked to see them, bringing, with unbounded hospitality, offerings of flowers, fruits, vegetables and cooked

dishes. They also brought little articles of gold, which they were anxious to exchange for Spanish gewgaws. A lively trade was constantly carried on, and the Spanish camp became a gay fair.

Teuhtlile now announced by messengers that he would visit Cortes on the following day. He appeared at the appointed time with a throng of attendants. Cortes met him and conducted him to his tent. Father Olmedo, the chaplain, now celebrated mass, the more to impress the Indian governor. After mass, dinner was served, and Teuhtlile tasted for the first time European wines and confectionery. These two ceremonies having passed off solemnly and in silence, Aguilar and Donna Marina were introduced, and a conversation began.

"I have come in the name of the great Montezuma," said Teuhtlile, "to inquire why you have come to his country?"

"I have come," answered Cortes, "from the most powerful monarch in the world, whose empire is immense and who has kings and princes for his vassals. He has heard of the great Montezuma and has sent me to him with a message and a present which I must deliver in person."

"You are scarcely arrived in this country," cried Teuhtlile indignantly, "and yet you desire

immediately to see our king! I am surprised that there should be in the whole world another king as powerful as he. But you say it is so and I will make it known to my sovereign that he may do his messenger honor."

Teuhtlile turned and addressed a word to his slaves who brought forward the present designed for Cortes. It was two loads of fine cotton garments, some mantles made of gorgeous feathers and a little wicker basket containing gold ornaments. Cortes in turn presented the governor with glass diamonds, and brought forward a present which he designed for Montezuma. It was an arm chair, carved and painted, a crimson cap, a gold medal stamped with the figures of St. George and the dragon, some artificial jewels wrapped in perfumed cotton, and strings of cut glass beads which would be much admired in a country where glass was unknown. He asked Teuhtlile to send these to the king, and ask permission for the strangers to come and see him.

Cortes saw that, while this conversation was going on, some Indians were busily occupied in painting on paper. They were the hieroglyphical painters of the country where the only writing was a system of picture representation. With

rapid strokes they were delineating the general appearance of the white men, their grey-hounds, their guns, and their cannon-balls. This manuscript was to be sent to the great monarch that he might have some idea of the strangers who had landed on his coast. Cortes quickly saw that it was to his interest to have the pictures as astounding as possible. He ordered the cavalry out for exercise, finely caparisoned and wearing poitrals, or plates of armor on their breasts from which hung bells.

"If we could have a charge upon the sand hills," said Cortes it would be good; but they will see that we sink into the mire. Let us go to the shore where the tide is going out and make a charge upon the wet sands, two abreast."

After the cavalry charge the cacique was treated to a discharge of artillery at which he greatly wondered. The painters rapidly put down what they saw. Meantime a gilt helmet on the head of one of the soldiers, attracted the eye of the cacique. He said that he would like Montezuma to see it for it looked like one upon the head of the god Quetzalcoatl at Mexico. Cortes said that it should be sent to the king, and at the same time suggested that it might be returned filled with gold dust, for he

wished to compare it with the gold of his own country.

"Indeed," said he, "we Spaniards are troubled with a disease of the heart for which gold is the only cure."

Teuhtlile now took leave of the strangers promising to return shortly with the kings answer. He immediately forwarded the Spanish present, together with the paintings and an account of his interview, to Mexico. Great was the concern of Montezuma when he thus received intelligence of the arrival of the strange armada with its still stranger inhabitants, their horsemen and explosive cannons. He was in the greatest perplexity as to how to receive them. Brave warrior though he was, he dared not offer them hostility lest they should be indeed messengers of the gods. His superstition stood in the way of the defence of his country. When he consulted his idols, they or rather the priests, are said to have answered that the strangers were on no account to be admitted to the realm, but on the other hand some of his counsellors argued that it would be best to receive them well for if they were, as it seemed, supernatural creatures it would be of no use to resist them. In miserable indecision, the unhappy monarch resolved

to take a middle course. His own hospitable and open handed disposition could not refuse them a friendly reception upon his shores, though he determined to forbid any nearer approach to the royal presence.

CHAPTER VIII.

MONTEZUMA'S GIFT.

THE Spanish army suffered much from swarms of mosquitoes and the heat of the sun beating upon the bare sands. By order of Teuhtlile, many of the natives came and built them tents of boughs near the strangers, that they might supply them with food. Cortes and his officers were furnished with fish, cooked in various ways, corn cakes and the delicious fruits and vegetables of the tropics. The common soldiers also easily procured all they wanted, in exchange for trifles.

At the end of seven days, ambassadors returned with Montezuma's answer. Teuhtlile accompanied them to the Spanish camp. He, with two Aztec nobles, headed a procession of nearly a hundred slaves, bearing Montezuma's present. The nobles saluted Cortes in the usual way, by touching their hands to the ground and then to their heads. Slaves swung censors of incense, while one of the ambassadors made a speech.

"The king," said he, "congratulates you on your happy arrival in his country. He is glad to know that such brave men have landed in his kingdom, and of the news you bring him from so great a monarch. In token of his pleasure at the gift which you sent, he returns it with this."

Some slaves came forward and spread upon the ground fine mats and cotton cloths, upon which they laid, first, a great circular plate of gold "as large as a cart wheel," and carved with various figures, in the midst of which was the sun. This was a sort of calendar or hieroglyphic representation of the Aztec cycle. There was a similar plate of silver, and then came the Spanish helmet, filled to the brim with gold dust. Some thirty loads of fine cotton cloth, collars of gold, crests of brilliant feathers and birds, and animals made of gold and silver, were laid before Cortes. The Spaniards looked on in open-eyed astonishment. Their delight at this display of rich material and fine workmanship was intense.

"This present," said the ambassador, "my king sends you. You may remain upon his shores as long as is necessary to rest from your journey. But, as for your demand to visit his city, he must forbid you that, as the journey lies through the countries of enemies, and is exceed-

ingly difficult. Nothing remains but for you to return."

Swallowing his disappointment at Montezuma's refusal of a permission to visit him, Cortes offered his thanks for the king's magnificent present, "which makes me only the more desirous," said he, "to meet him in person. I dare not indeed present myself before my own sovereign without having accomplished this, the object of my voyage. We who have sailed over two thousand leagues of sea, think little of the perils and fatigues of a short journey by land."

Cortes had exhausted his own magnficence on his first present to Montezuma. He managed to gather together some fine Holland shirts, a Florentine goblet ornamented with gilt, and a few trinkets. These he requested the ambassador to take to his king, with the above answer. The noble received them rather coldly and departed.

The general now saw that he had made a disastrous choice for a settlement. To this day, the entrance to Mexico is through a dangerous land of malarial fevers. Cortes had already lost thirty of his men, while he was in daily danger of losing his vessels from the fury of the north winds, which swept the coast from time to time. While waiting for Montezuma's answer, he therefore des-

patched one of his captains, Francisco de Montejo, in search of a better harbor and camping ground.

Within ten days the Mexican embassy returned with a present of gold ornaments, valued at three thousand ounces of gold, ten bales of feather mantles and four jewels, resembling emeralds, greatly prized by the Actecs, but entirely valueless among Europeans. Montezuma had sent word that he wished his visitor's happiness, but that he desired no more messages sent him, nor did he wish to hear any more propositions to visit Mexico."

Cortes answered courteously, but he turned to his men and exclaimed, "Truly this is a great monarch and rich; yet it shall go hard but we will one day pay him a visit in his capital."

At this moment the bell tolled for Ave Maria, and instantly all the soldiers dropped on their knees before a large wooden cross on the sandy beach. The Mexican ambassadors looked on with astonishment. Cortes, whose religion was strangely mixed with his avarice, immediately determined to make a first stroke against idolatry. He hinted to Father Olmedo that now was the time to deliver a sermon. The priest thereupon began explaining the mysteries of the Catholic

faith, and informing the Mexicans that one of their objects in coming to this country was to abolish idolatry and human sacrifice. It is to be feared that the discourse did not have its desired effect. The ambassadors took a cold leave of the Spaniards.

Montezuma was determined to rid himself of his pertinacious guests. He had ordered that the hospitable mode of victualling the army should be immediately discontinued. Consequently the invaders arose one morning to find the friendly array of native tents entirely deserted. The Spaniards were alarmed, and nightly expected an attack, but none was meditated by the indulgent king. Unfortunately, in his princely magnificence, the latter had let the Spaniards into the secret of his wealth, and at the same time shown his own indecision of character.

CHAPTER IX.

"THE RICH TOWN OF THE TRUE CROSS."

THE elation of the Spaniards at Montezuma's rich gifts, was succeeded by discontent at the privations which they now suffered. Montejo, however, returned in a few days to announce that he had discovered one passable harbor, and this was furnished with a pleasant camping ground. But now arose various troubles for Cortes. His men were not well-disciplined soldiers, accustomed to obey their officers, but a band of adventurers and gold-seekers, considering their general as an equal. Moreover, there was among them a party devoted to the interests of Velasquez. The commission of Cortes from the governor had now indeed been fulfilled. Velasquez had not the power to authorize colonization, until he had received the authority from Spain, for which Cortes had not waited. But Cortes even now revolved great schemes in his mind, which would have frightened his followers had he imparted them Meantime, in the face of Monte

zuma's displeasure and great power, it seemed indeed ridiculous to attempt to carry them out.

At this juncture, five natives were seen approaching the camp, of a different dress and appearance from the Mexicans. They were ambassadors from Cempoalla, a town of the Totonacs, a people who had been recently conquered by the Mexicans. They brought the strangers a friendly greeting. Cortes found that they were dissatisfied with the Mexican rule, which they found very oppressive. This was joyful news to the general, who saw in the possibility of rebellion among Montezuma's subjects, an opening for his plans. He treated his guests with the greatest consideration, promising soon to visit their chief. But now his schemes seemed likely to be overthrown in his own camp.

"It is time to return," muttered the soldiers, "and report what has been done to the governor of Cuba. What is the use of lingering on these barren shores, until we have brought the whole Mexican empire on our heads?"

To such complaints Cortes made soft answers, and thus calmed for a time the rising discontent. Had he not been the most wily of manœuvrers, his enterprise must now have fallen through. But he had warm friends as well as persistent ene-

mies, and he knew how to use his friends to the best advantage. The cavaliers, Puertocarrero, Olid, Avilla and Alvarado worked busily and secretly among the troops on behalf of the general.

"Here we are," said they; "we have been persuaded to go on this expedition as colonists and now we find that Cortes has no commission except for trade. The friends of Velasquez want us to return to Cuba with what little we have gained, that the greedy governor may grasp it all and we remain as poor as we were before. Come let us form a colony for his majesty and elect Cortes captain." Secretly as these conferences were carried on, the friends of Velasquez soon got wind of them. They loudly remonstrated, accusing Cortes of being at the bottom of them, and demanding that he should immediately prepare to sail for Cuba.

"Nothing is farther from my thoughts than to exceed my instructions," was Cortes conciliatory answer. "I do indeed prefer to remain in the country and continue our profitable trade. But since the army thinks otherwise I shall certainly defer to your opinion."

Those who had most desired it were thunderstruck when, on the following morning, procla-

mation was made for the army to prepare immediately to embark for Cuba. They now reflected that they were likely to meet only rebuke, like Grijalva, on their arrival at the island.

"We are betrayed by the general," cried Cortes' friends. They thronged around him. "We came here," they exclaimed, "expecting to form a settlement, if the state of the country authorized it. Now it seems you have no commission from the governor to make one. But there are interests higher than those of Velasquez, which demand it. These lands do not belong to him, but were discovered for the emperor. It is necessary to plant a colony to watch over his interests instead of wasting time in barter, or, still worse, of returning now to Cuba. If you refuse, we shall protest against your conduct as disloyal."

Cortes appeared embarrassed. He meekly asked time for consideration, and promised to answer on the following day. At the appointed time he made the army a little speech declaring his willingness, as they demanded it, to settle a colony for the emperor. He then nominated a magistracy in which he took care to include Montejo, one of the opposite faction. They were sworn into office, and the new-born city dubbed Villa Rica de Vera Cruz, or The Rich Town of

the True Cross, one of the curious names of the Spaniards typical of their own mixture of avarice and religious zeal.

The magistrates immediately assembled, and Cortes presented himself before them throwing his commission from Velasquez upon the table and tendering the resignation of his office as captain-general. He then left the body to its deliberations. In the course of an hour he was recalled, reinstated as captain-general. He was to have one fifth of the gold and silver hereafter procured from the natives. Cortes at first seemed reluctant to accept the office, but the Spanish proverb runs, "you may entreat me to do that which I like to do," and he was again prevailed upon.

Now, indeed, did the Velasquez party find themselves outwitted. Great was their angry disgust. They accused the opposite party of all kinds of villainy. The accusation was returned with interest, and the factions were likely to come to blows when Cortes interfered with the iron hand which had been so carefully concealed under a velvet paw in the late proceedings. He put the leaders of the opposition, Velasquez de Leon, a relative of the governor, his page, Escobar and Diego de Ordaz into irons, and sent

them on board the vessels. He then occupied some of the rebellious troops, thus deprived of a head on a foraging expedition. While they were gone, every effort was made to gain over the men in favor of Cortes. "Gold which breaks the solid rocks," says Bernal Diaz, was lavished liberally, for Cortes was not above bribery, and when the foragers returned with plenty of poultry and vegetables, and all had eaten heartily, the two factions consented to a reconciliation and, with the volatility of the Latin race, embraced all around. With active address, Cortes devoted himself to winning the affections of his men. He soon brought out his prisoners and, releasing them, succeeded in gaining them over to his interest. Much of this was done, it is said "by the softening effects of gold." Thus Montezuma's treasure served to bind together his enemies the more strongly.

CHAPTER X.

CORTES DECEIVES MONTEZUMA.

THE artillery was now loaded into the vessels which were to coast as far north as Chiahuitzla, the port that had been chosen for the new settlement. Meanwhile, Cortes would march around by land, making his intended visit to the cacique of Cempoalla. The army soon left behind, the dreary sand-hills which had so long bounded their horizon, and entered upon a fertile country, clothed with the rank vegetation of the tropics, and abounding in game. They passed through several villages, which the inhabitants had deserted at their approach. In the temples they found books of paper, made from the fibre of the magney, and to their horror, the remains of human sacrifice.

As the Spaniards neared Cempoalla, they were met by a delegation of the principal citizens of the town, who presented Cortes and the cavalry with bunches of sweet-scented flowers. They invited the strangers to their town, and excused

their cacique for not having come to meet them, as he was very fat and unwieldy. The Spaniards were met by crowds of natives before they reached the town. The women of the better class wore robes of fine cotton, reaching from the neck to the ankles. The men wore a wide sash about the loins, and all were adorned with ear, nose and lip jewels. The Spaniards had not yet seen a Mexican city. Some of the cavaliers galloped ahead to get a glimpse of Cempoalla. It lay glistening in the sun, the poorer houses white-washed, and the palaces covered with polished stucco. Instantly one of the cavaliers wheeled, put spurs to his horse, and returned to the army. "The city is built of silver, the city is built of silver," cried he.

A wave of excitement ran through the troops, for whom nothing was too romantic for belief in this new world. In a few minutes, however, they reached the "silver city," and all joined in a hearty laugh at the expense of the cavalier. In future, he was often reminded that anything white was silver in his eyes. The "fat cacique" as the Spaniards called him, met Cortes in the city square. He leaned for support on two attendants. He received the Spaniards courteously, and assigned them some of the public buildings

to live in. They were delighted to find themselves in very comfortable quarters, the better appreciated after their life in camp. They were now feasted with maize bread and baskets of plums. Though he believed himself among friends, the wise general took every precaution for security.

When the Spaniards were rested and refreshed, the "fat cacique," held an interview with Cortes. The general embraced the chief, who presented him with some gold and mantles. Cortes, as usual, made a speech in praise of his monarch and religion. The fat chief sighed, and made bitter complaints of the harshness of "the great Montezuma," whose tax-gatherers took from them all their treasure, and whose armies swept down upon a rebellious province, carrying away the young men and maidens for sacrifice. Cortes said that he would free him from this detestable yoke and the chief made a "discreet" answer, desirous not to compromise himself.

On the following day the Spaniards moved on. The fat cacique sent with them several hundred Indians to carry their baggage. It was customary in this country where there were no beasts of burden, thus to aid friendly travellers on their way.

The town of Chiahuitzla was perched upon a rocky cliff. The inhabitants had fled at the approach of the Spaniards, but fifteen of the principal Indians met them in the public square, and told them that the people would return when they were reassured. The Spaniards had been here but a short time, when they were followed by the fat chief, born upon a litter. He wished, it seemed, to do further honors to his visitors. While they were conversing upon the tyranny of the Aztec king, a messenger rushed in, greatly excited, to tell the chief that Montezuma's tax-gathers were coming. The natives turned pale, according to the account, and went tremblingly to receive them.

The royal tax-gatherers soon passed by the Spaniards with great pomp. They were five Mexican nobles. Their glossy, black hair was tied in a knot on top of their heads. They wore drawers and mantles, richly ornamented. Each one carried a bunch of flowers in his hand, of which he occasionally smelled with great dignity. They were attended by servants, who fanned them and carried their official rods, a sort of hooked stick with a cord fastened to it. They passed by Cortes without deigning to look upon him. The poor fat chief felt that they had come

upon him at an inopportune moment. All haste was made to prepare lodgings and chocolate for these persons. Numbers of the principal citizens attended them at dinner, and were only too officious in anticipating their wishes. When their lordships had refreshed themselves, they sent for the fat cacique and his fellow officers. They reprimanded them severely for receiving and entertaining the Spaniards, contrary to Montezuma's express commands. In expiation, they were told that they must supply twenty slaves for sacrifice in Mexico.

The natives came to Cortes with the news of this fresh act of tyranny. He indignantly commanded them to arrest and imprison the Aztec nobles. They were terrified at the idea, but Cortes was determined upon it, and the deed was finally done according to his wish. At midnight the wily general secretly released two of them and had them brought before him.

"What country do you belong to, and why are you made prisoners?" innocently inquired the general through Marina.

"We are Montezuma's officers, and have been seized by the people of Chiahuitzla who were aided and abetted in it by you," haughtily answered the Mexican nobles.

"I assure you I know nothing of it, and am very sorry it has happened," answered Cortes.

To prove this, he feasted them and treated them with the utmost kindness. He told them to go and tell Montezuma that he wished to be his friend and servant, promising at the same time that he would release their companions and reprimand the rebellious cacique. They told him that they dared not pass through the country of the rebels. Cortes then sent them by boat to a part of the coast which was not under the dominion of the "fat cacique."

Great was the anger of the Totonacs at the escape of the two nobles. They were determined on sacrificing the remainder of their prisoners, of whom they had stood in such awe, but a few hours before. To prevent this, Cortes took the captive Mexicans under his own custody and put them on board his vessels where he left them unbound, and treated them with the utmost kindness, promising soon to release them entirely. The fat cacique and the other Totonac officers were now frightened at what they had done. It would be of no avail to beg the forgiveness of their affronted king. Cortes urged them to swear allegiance to the king of Spain. They complied, since he had them in a position where they could

not do otherwise. The news spread rapidly through the surrounding country. There was a mixture of joy, amazement and terror in the feelings of the natives at the daring acts of their rulers.

The Spaniards set about the building of their new city, half a league from Chiahuitzla. The ground for a church, square, arsenal, and fort were soon traced out, and the Spaniards went busily to work, assisted by the natives, to raise the buildings. Most active among them all, carrying stones and digging foundations, was Hernando Cortes, inspiring all by his energy.

Meantime swift couriers had brought Montezuma intelligence of the revolt among the Totonacs. With quick decision, this time, he mustered two armies, one to punish the rebels and a second to march against the Spaniards. Just as they were setting out from Mexico the two fugitive tax-gatherers arrived. Their report of the kindly offices of Cortes in their behalf mollified the king, and with subsiding indignation, his superstitious fears of the strangers returned. Resuming his former half-way policy, Montezuma resolved for the present to forego any interference with his unwelcome visitors. He sent two young princes, his nephews, and some old nobles as am-

bassadors to the Spanish camp. With his usual munificence he sent with them a valuable present of gold and feather mantles.

On arriving at the new Spanish settlement the ambassadors thanked Cortes in the name of their sovereign for his courtesy to the Mexican officers. They complained, however, that he had instigated the Totonacs to the rebellion for which the king would punish the latter at some future time. Montezuma, they said, was convinced that they were the strangers mentioned in an ancient prophecy and that their ancestors were the same as his own. For this reason he would spare the revolting province while they were there. Cortes, as was his wont, made soft speeches in answer. He entertained the young princes handsomely, taking care to display the wonders of his cavalry and the powers of his artillery before they left. He sent them away with a present of "glass diamonds" and liberated the three remaining prisoners.

The fat chief and his people were perfectly astounded when they heard of this friendly conference, where they had expected open rupture. Surely these strangers must be sons of the gods or how could they thus terrify the dread Montezuma at such a distance?

CHAPTER XI.

THE IDOLS OF CEMPOALLA THROWN DOWN— CORTES DESTROYS HIS SHIPS.

CORTES was now called upon to aid his Indian allies against a neighboring town with which which they had a dispute. He immediately set out for the hostile town. On the way, one of his soldiers stole two fowls. Knowing that everything depended on preventing those outrages upon the natives which had ruined so many Spanish colonies in the new world, Cortes instantly ordered the man hung. His life was saved, however, by Alvarado, who cut the wretch down with his sword before he was dead. Cortes was probably very willing that this should be done as he could not afford to lose a man. He found the Indians against whom he had marched, disposed to be friendly and succeeded in reconciling them with the natives of Cempoalla. When he returned the fat cacique proposed an alliance by marriage with the Spaniards that their friendship might be secured. He offered Cortes eight women,

daughters of principal men among the Totonacs. Seven of them, he said, were designed for his captains, and the eighth, who was his niece, was for Cortes himself. The general thanked the chief, but said that the Spaniards could not accept the ladies until they had been baptized.

Seizing this opportunity for abolishing idolatry among the natives, Cortes proposed the subject to the principal men of Cempoalla. They were horror-struck. They would not listen to any such thing. Unable to accomplish anything by persuasion, Cortes turned to his men.

"Come, let us prostrate these abominable idols, though it cost us all our lives," cried he.

The zealous Spaniards sprang instantly to arms. Hardly waiting for the word of command they set out for the great temple of Cempoalla. The fat cacique dared not endure this insult. He immediately called his men to arms. The Indian warriors rushed from every quarter toward their temple. Among them were the priests in their dark robes, franticly urging them to defend their religion.

"Proceed not further in such a deed, for it will bring down destruction upon us, and upon you also," cried the cacique.

"Since you will not do it yourselves, I am de

termined to hurl your false gods down the steps of the temple," answered Cortes.

"You are not worthy to approach them," exclaimed the chief.

But the fanatic Spaniards were in no mood to listen to remonstrances. With quick decision, Cortes caused the principal leaders of the Indians and among them the cacique, to be seized.

"Now quiet your people," he commanded them, "for if an arrow is shot against a Spaniard, you will all lose your lives." Marina also added her remonstrances, as to the futility of resistance, reminding the Indians that they had broken with Montezuma, and could not afford to break with Cortes. The fat chief submitted, covering his face with his hands, and exclaiming that the gods would avenge themselves.

Fifty Spaniards immediately rushed up the steps of the temple. The fantastic idols, with their symbolical countenances and their sanctuaries blackened with gore, were very horrible in the eyes of the Spaniards. They imagined that Satan himself must have appeared to the Indians, and furnished them a model for their images. With great zest they tore the huge idols from their foundations, and dashed them down the sides of the pyramid, amid the joyous shouts of

the Spaniards, and the tears and groans of the natives. They then collected the debris and made a great bonfire of it.

The insulted gods having offered no resistance, the Indians abandoned their fears, and turned eagerly to assist the Spaniards in building the new sanctuary. The walls of the temple were cleansed, native workmen covered them with fresh stucco, and a new altar arose, surmounted by a cross, which was hung with flowers. A procession was now formed. The image of the virgin, adorned with flowers, was carried through the streets. Some of the principal heathen priests, dressed in robes of white followed, bearing candles. The procession finally climbed the pyramidal temple, and deposited the image on the altar. Mass was celebrated by Father Olmedo, who made the Indians an eloquent speech, by which they were apparently much touched. The eight Indian women were now baptized and received by the Spaniards, who returned to the infant city of Villa Rica, having left an old and disabled soldier in charge of the shrine. It was with a good conscience that they turned their backs on Cempoalla, feeling that they had dealt heathenism a severe blow, in persuading the natives to accept what they regarded as a more powerful idol.

Cortes found, much to his surprise, a Spanish vessel in port. It was commanded by an adventurer who had followed him to Mexico. He brought with him eleven men and two horses, an acceptable addition to the forces of the Spaniards. This man also brought the news that Velasquez had received authority from Spain, to colonize in the new world. Cortes now resolved to make an attempt to get some recognition from the emperor of his own discoveries and services, without which they would amount to nothing. He would send a vessel to Spain with an account of what he and his companions had done, and a rich present for the royal treasury. He resolved to send more than the fifth of the newly-acquired treasure, to which the emperor had a right, that he might the more impress him with the riches of the country. For this purpose Cortes relinquished his own share, and persuaded his officers to do the same, who in their turn, prevailed upon the soldiers to give up their portion of the gold and curiosities, that weight might be given to the proposed representations which were so necessary to their future aggrandizement and wealth. So great was the power of Cortes' example and influence over these turbulent and avaricious adventurers, that they relinquished their cherished

plunder at his demand. Three letters were now addressed to the emperor, one by Cortes, one by his officers, and one by the men. They represented the importance of their discoveries, the greed and injustice of Velasquez, prayed that he might not be allowed to interfere with them, and that their new organization with its officers might be confirmed.

The cavaliers Puertocarrero and Montejo were chosen to convey this message to Spain. For this purpose one of the best vessels of the fleet was set apart, manned with fifteen seamen. To the treasure were added some native books to show their hieroglyphical writings and four native slaves who had been rescued from the cages in which they were confined for sacrifice. The ship sailed from Villa Rica on the twenty-sixth of July 1519. The commanders had orders not to touch at Cuba. Montejo, however, wished to visit a plantation which he owned on the northern side of the island. Having stopped here, contrary to orders, a sailor got ashore and hastening through the island spread the tidings of the doings of Cortes everywhere. They speedily reached Velasquez who was transported with rage. He stormed at the men who had recommended Cortes for the post. He sent two swift-sailing vessels in

pursuit of Cortes' ship. But she had already sped far out into the Atlantic. Unable to capture the embassy, Velasquez appealed to the Hieronymite fathers in Hispaniola. Receiving no satisfactory answer from them, he resolved to fit out a grand fleet, on his own account, to take possession of Mexico. He immediately began to busy himself with the preparations.

Meantime a plot had hatched in the new colony. A number of soldiers with the priest, Diaz at their head, had plotted to seize a vessel and flee for Cuba where they would inform the governor of the situation of Cortes and of his intentions. The conspiracy had almost succeeded. Provisions and water had been secretly conveyed on board the vessel and the conspirators were on the eve of sailing when one of their number, repenting, divulged the whole. His story was confirmed by investigation. Two of the ringleaders were sentenced to die, another to have his feet cut off according to the barbarous modes of punishment of the day, and others were to be whipped. The priest escaped in virtue of his orders. Cortes is said to have wished that he did not know how to write when he signed the death warrants of these men. Like most successful generals, however, he did not regard human lives

very highly when they stood in the way of his purposes.

Cortes now saw that the vessels would be a fruitful source of trouble to him. They were always a tempting means for reaching home. He dared not march for Mexico and leave a garrison at Villa Rica lest it should desert him. He had already forfeited all hope in retreat without full success. He resolved to destroy his vessels and thus cut away retreat from his men. In this as in everything else he was very crafty. It is said that by use of gold he induced the pilots to report that the ships were worm-eaten and unfit for service. He managed that his friends should advise him to destroy them. They were then dismantled of everything that could be of value and sunk. Whether the troops knew of Cortes' intention before it was carried out, as one authority asserts, or did not, as others assert, matters very little. They may have grumbled, but it was now of no use. The great mind of their leader was steadily intent on one large scheme, from which he would not be swerved. Cortes pacified the doubts and discontent of his men by his wonderful personal influence, and their minds turned to the great object before them. "To Mexico, to Mexico!" they cried.

CHAPTER XII.

FORWARD FOR MEXICO.

CORTES was preparing to set out for the interior, when serious apprehensions were raised in his mind, by the news that some strange vessels were hovering off the coast near Villa Rica, and made no answer to the signals from that post. Cortes was at Cempoalla. Alarmed lest Velasquez was about to interfere in his plans, he hastened immediately to Villa Rica. The commander of this post offered to go to the strange vessels in his place, while he rested. But this Cortes refused to do.

"A wounded hare takes no naps," said he, and hastened on without stopping to take food. He fell in with four Spaniards who had been sent ashore to reconnoiter. They said that their fleet had been sent by the governor of Jamaica, who had a royal commission to discover new lands upon this coast. Relieved of his fears, Cortes set about persuading the men to join them. It was no hard matter to induce the Spanish adventur-

ers of the day to join an enterprise which promised ample booty. They readily consented not only to join him themselves, but to assist him in entrapping their companions, for Cortes was ready, by fair means or foul, to add to his forces. The newly-acquired recruits, however, could not coax their wary companions by signs to approach the shore, while Cortes and his men were there. This commander now bethought himself of a strategem. He caused four of his men to change clothes with the men from the ships. With the remainder of his forces, he then marched back toward Villa Rica, along the shore in full view of the vessels. When he had reached a point out of sight of the ships, he wheeled around and making his way through the woods, hid with his men near their disguised companions. These, early on the following morning, went down upon the shore, and made signs to those on shipboard. A boat immediately put off with six men. Two of them landed. Meantime the disguised soldiers were busily washing their faces in a little brook, that they might not be too closely seen Those who were in the boat called to them. One of the disguised men answered them, telling them to come on shore. But the strange voice excited their suspicion, and they rowed off, leaving their

two companions to their fate. The ships sailed away, and Cortes returned to Villa Rica, having gained six men by a petty strategem unworthy of so great a man, but altogether in accordance with the character of Hernando Cortes. He had been two nights and a day without sleep or food in prosecuting this adventure.

On the sixteenth of August, 1519, the Spaniards set out for the interior, determined "to see what sort of a thing this great Montezuma was, of whom they had heard so much." Cortes' forces amounted to about four hundred infantry and fifteen cavalry, with the addition of some Cempoallan Indians to act as guides and some two hundred of the native porters, who were necessarily greatly used in a country destitute of draught animals. They soon left the rich vegetation of the tropics, and began climbing the rocky, mountain passes toward the interior. The towering mountains above them, dark with pines, the white summit of Mt. Orizaba which serves as a beacon to sailors, many miles at sea, the deep valleys filled with rich and rank vegetation, into which they looked from rocky precipices, the beautiful plains of the hot sea-coast countries at their feet, with a faint strip of sea along the horizon;—none of these things interested the Spaniards

so much as the conquest which they planned, the gold after which they grasped, and the fame for which they strived, and which would cost many of them their lives. It was indeed a toilsome journey, forced forward as they were by their indomitable leader, and burdened with artillery and stores. Day by day as they pressed upward, making but short stays in the native towns upon the way, but leaving behind them crosses in almost every place, the increasing cold struck upon them like a chill. In clambering through a high and rugged pass, indeed, they were assailed by a storm of sleet and hail from which the Spaniards suffered, even in their mail of quilted cotton, but which was almost intolerable to the half-naked natives of the hot countries. Some of them died by the way.

The little Spanish army at last entered upon the region of the high tablelands. Here the climate was temperate, and plantations of maize and the Mexican magney, known now as the century plant, from which the natives make a fermented liquor, a coarse cloth, and paper, were everywhere seen. So carefully did these people farm that they are said to have erected small towers in their cornfields, that they might watch the growing grain, and keep away the birds from

the young plant. The Spaniards soon found themselves in a considerable city. The cacique of the place received them but coldly. Cortes asked him if he was a subject of Montezuma.

"Who is there that is not?" haughtily replied the chief.

"I certainly am not," answered Cortes. "My king is the most powerful monarch in the world. He has princes for his vassals as great as Montezuma himself."

"Montezuma has thirty vassals, each master of a hundred thousand men," boasted the cacique on his part. "His revenues are immense; for every subject, no matter how poor, pays something. His capital is in a lake connected with the mainland by long causeways, intersected by drawbridges, so that all communication may be cut off."

Cortes attempted to force his religion on this city. He was not seconded by Father Olmedo, however, who objected that the holy symbols, if erected in this place, would only be desecrated by a people who knew nothing of their meaning. Before leaving, Cortes took occasion to inquire of the cacique, if he had any gold, for he would like to send some to his king.

"I have gold," was the response, "but I will

give you none lest it should displease Montezuma. Should he require it, my gold, myself, and all that I possess would be yours."

Shortly after leaving this city, Cortes was obliged to decide between two routes to Mexico. One of these lay through the city of Cholula, and the cacique had advised him to take this road; but his Cempoallan allies warned him against the people of Cholula as treacherous. They advised the Spaniards to take the other road through the republic of Tlascala, which was in deadly enmity to Montezuma, and the more likely to make common cause with Cortes. He resolved on this route, and sent an embassy of four Cempoallans to Tlascala to announce his approach. He sent by them a present of a red cap, a sword, and cross-bow, with a complimentary letter, requesting permission to pass through their country. It was not to be supposed that the natives would understand the letter; but the messengers knew the contents of it, and it served them as a credential.

After the ambassadors had gone, the Spaniards rested a few days in the friendly country where they were. They always marched in battle order, and always slept on their arms, whether in the land of friend or foe. Their wary leader well knew

that surprise was most to be feared in Indian warfare.

"We are few against many, brave comrades," he would often say. "Let us be ready, then, not as though we were going to battle, but as though we were already in the midst of it."

Hearing nothing from their messengers, the Spaniards pushed on toward Tlascala. As they neared the mountain passes, a great wall suddenly rose within view. It was nine feet high, and reached from mountain side to mountain side, being six miles in extent. In the centre was a semi-circular bulge, where the wall overlapped leaving a narrow passageway for entrance, which could be guarded on both sides.

CHAPTER XIII.

A LION IN THE PATH.

MONTEZUMA had not rested content that Tlascala should remain independent almost in the very midst of his own possessions. More than once he had attempted to conquer the indomitable mountaineers. A great army had been sent against them commanded by his favorite son. But the Tlascalans had withstood Montezuma's forces, and killed his son. Enraged, the king made a great combination, raised several armies, and swept irresistibly through the valley. But the inhabitants had only retired into their mountain fastnesses, and suddenly poured down upon the king's armies from all sides. It was too much for them; they were driven from the valley. Tlascala remained independent, but she was cut off from all intercourse with the provinces of the hot countries which were under the dominion of Montezuma. The Tlascalans were thus entirely deprived of salt, cotton, and cacao. The people had long since become accustomed to eat

their food without salt, and to do without other articles of commerce.

The news of the arrival of the Spaniards and their deeds had reached the Tlascalans. They were surprised, however, when Cortes requested permission to pass through their country. Tlascala seems to have been governed by four chiefs and a council. The Cempoallan ambassadors were received by this body, before which they delivered their message. They were then requested to retire, and the subject was discussed.

"I am of opinion," said one of the chiefs, "that we ought to receive these strangers. According to the account we have of them, they seem to be those heroes of whom tradition tells, and of which the earthquake, the comet, and several other strange events of the last few years have been forewarnings. If they be indeed immortal, it will be of no use for us to attempt to oppose them."

Xicotencatl, a very aged and influential chief, arose and replied: "Those men who demand entrance to our land, appear to me rather as monsters, cast up by the sea because it could not endure them, than gods descended from heaven, as some have imagined. Is it possible they can be gods who greedily covet gold and pleasures?

And what ought we not to dread from them, in a country so poor as this, where we are even destitute of salt? Let us then reject their demand, and fight them if they still insist. The council acted upon the old chief's advice.

Meantime Cortes had filed his army unresisted through the fortifications on the frontier of Tlascala. It was designed to defend her only easy pass from the Mexicans, and was now, in time of peace, without a garrison. The Tlascalans were doubtless already on the way to resist the Spaniards at this pass, and, had Cortes waited a little longer for the friendly answer which he confidently expected, he would have met a resistance which he could hardly have overcome. Unsuspicious of danger, he, with some of his cavaliers galloped a mile or two ahead of the army to get a view of the country. They soon espied some natives wearing plumes upon their heads and armed with shields and the curious swords of the country, made of a stout club or handle, in which were inserted at short distances small sharp blades of a hard mineral, called itzli. The Indians fled at sight of the Spanish cavaliers. Unable to persuade them of his friendly intentions, Cortes galloped in pursuit. Finding that they could not outrun the horses, the Tlascalans

turned at bay and fought the Spaniards with such desperate ferocity that they killed two of their horses. They were now reinforced by an immense body of Indians who were a little in their rear. There remained but eight of the Spanish cavalry to breast the desperate onslaught. They had great odds in their favor, however, and succeeded in killing a number of the native warriors at the expense of several wounded men and horses. The Spanish infantry hastened to their relief, and at sight of them the Indians retreated.

Shortly after this skirmish, two of the ambassadors whom Cortes had sent to the Tlascalan authorities returned with some of these people, who assured the general that they had no other intention but to receive him hospitably, and that they were not responsible for the recent attack which had been made on the part of the populace. Cortes pretended to believe this declaration.

The Spaniards secretly buried the two horses that the natives might not be encouraged to farther hostilities by the sight of them. Cortes very much regretted their loss, especially as the Indians would be undeceived as to the mortal nature of this strange animal. Night was coming on. The weary and famished soldiers marched but a league farther, and took up their quarters

by the side of a running stream. They passed a watchful night, relieving each other in standing guard. At early dawn the army was in motion. The Spaniards were soon joined by the two remaining ambassadors, who reported that the Tlascalans were up in arms against the intruders. The ambassadors had been imprisoned; but they had managed to escape, being in great dread lest they should be sacrificed. The army had hardly moved two stones' throw farther when numbers of Indians began to appear. Cortes immediately brought forward Aguilar and Donna Marina, and attempted to make peaceful overtures. They were only answered, however, by showers of stones and arrows. The Spaniards were galled by their smarting wounds. Without further ceremony, Cortes shouted the battle-cry:

"St. Iago, and at them."

A vigorous charge staggered the enemy. The Spaniards were soon driving the Indians before them. Elated with their easy victory, they were entrapped before they knew it. They found themselves drawn into a gorge where the rough ground impeded the movements of the cavalry. Before them was arrayed a great army of Indians, amounting to thousands, when we make a sufficient deduction from the accounts of the Span-

iards, who are never to be depended on in their estimate of numbers on the opposite side. They were commanded by a courageous young general, Xicotencatl, son of the old chieftain, and all wore his colors, red and white.

The Spanish troops were obliged to force their way in a compact column through the defile. They afforded a good target for Indian archers and for the slings which the natives used a great deal in battle, and which frequently did deadly work, and were the most dreaded of any Indian weapon by the Spaniards. They made them "smart for it," however, when they had reached the open plain again. Nevertheless, the enemy closed upon them from every side. Rebuffed, they only rolled back again upon the little army like a mighty wave, until the men were so crowded together that they could scarcely move. The Tlascalans were especially ambitious to kill more of the strange animals which gave their enemy so much advantage. A fine horse-man, named Pedro de Moren, was charging amongst the Indians, levelling his spear always at their faces, as Cortes had ordered. A number of warriors with their club-swords sprang upon him. They seized Moren's lance, and wounded him dangerously. With a thrust in the neck, they

killed the horse. In a moment more, the rider would have been carried off for sacrifice. A few Spaniards sallied forth to his rescue. Many of them could not leave their ranks, lest they be broken into by the enemy. They succeeded in bringing off the cavalier, but he afterwards died of his wounds. The dead horse was triumphantly secured by the natives, who carried it off to send it in pieces, as a trophy, to the various towns of Tlascala. But the Spanish artillery mowed down the ranks of the Tlascalans, and Cortes cried:

"If we fail now, the cross can never be planted in the land. Forward comrades! When was it ever known that a Castillian turned his back on the enemy."

Finally the Tlascalans drew off in good order, but with great loss, while the Spanish losses were small, owing in part to the desire of the Indians to capture their enemies alive. The Spaniards were too jaded to follow the enemy from the field.

Several days were now spent in resting and in forays into the neighboring country, by means of which provisions were obtained, towns destroyed, and the people intimidated as much as possible. Two envoys were sent to the Tlascalan camps offering peace.

"Tell your chief," answered the ferocious

Xicotencatl, "that his men may pursue their way to Tlascala, where peace will be made with them by devouring their flesh and offering their hearts and blood to our gods. As for any farther answer, I will give it to him next morning in his camp."

This message sounded almost like a doom in the ears of the Spaniards, who seemed farther than ever from their great object, the Mexican capital. A large army of Indians lay near them, and they were little more than four hundred men, accompanied by some Indian allies. Cortes, however, not to be caught in camp by Xicotencatl, mustered his forces before daylight, and gave the soldiers their directions. The Spaniards marched out in the early morning with the banner of the cross at their head. They had advanced but a mile or two, when they saw the great army of Tlascala spread out before them. The warriors were decorated with head-dresses of gay plumes. From their shields hung long feathers, and those of higher rank wore gay feather mantles. As the Spaniards approached, they heard the blowing and clanging of rude musical instruments. The two armies met, and almost immediately every Spaniard was pierced in some spot with darts or arrows. The ground was thickly strewn with

them. Spaniard and Indian grappled foot to foot and hand to hand. The sword of steel and the sword of itzli struggled together. The Indian forces closed in on all sides of the little European army. Among them charged the cavalry, always aiming their spears at the eyes of the enemy. Their dense ranks were mowed down by cross-bow, cannon and musketry. Equal courage made the battle a long one, but superior arms and science must win the day. A quarrel between the several chieftains held aloof two-thirds of the Tlascalan forces from the assistance of Xicotencatl and hastened the Spanish victory.

The battle had been too hard won for a pursuit. Every horse was wounded, and almost every man. No one was excused from duty under plea of a wound, unless it were a severe one. The Spaniards buried their dead in a sort of cave, which the natives used for a dwelling. They filled this up with earth to conceal their losses. Without salt for their food or oil for their wounds, and shivering under the cold wind from the mountains, they awaited what next might happen.

Cortes again sent an embassy to Tlascala, offering peace; but the indomitable little republic could not yet make up her mind to submit. The

priests were consulted as to whether the enemy could be conquered. The oracles gave it out that they would not be invincible at night. The good sense of the Tlascalans probably told them that cavalry and firearms would not be so effective in the darkness. But Cortes was not to be caught napping. His men slept on their arms, and their horses stood saddled and bridled beside them. A sentinel descried the dusky body of Indians approaching. The alarm was given, and the men sprang to arms. Meantime, the Indian forces stole along, partially hidden by the fields of corn. They neared the hill on which the Spanish adventurers lay encamped. Suddenly "St. Iago! St. Iago!" rung through the air, and the Spaniards poured down the sides. The Indians fled. It seemed to them that the Spaniards had divined their purposes by miracle.

Another envoy to the city of Tlascala, now received a more favorable answer, but stopped on its return at the camp of Xicotencatl. This stubborn chief detained the messengers of peace, for he was still determined to conquer the intruders. Meantime the Spaniards were in a deplorable condition. Some fifty-five of their number had died from wounds, sickness, and cold. Cortes and Father Olmedo were both sick with fever, and

the golden city of Mexico seemed but a visionary dream after the experience of the last few days. Added to this, discontent arose in the camp. Some who had left good houses and plantations in the island of Cuba for this wild adventure began to long for home. They represented to Cortes that now was the time to return if they ever hoped to. They wished to retreat immediately to Villa Rica. They mourned over the loss of their ships; but suggested that one might be constructed to send to Cuba for aid.

"Gentlemen," replied Cortes, "I believe there never existed braver soldiers than mine. If we persevere, our fame will exceed the most illustrious of our predecessors. As to our return, it is true the natives we have left behind are now friendly; but, if we seemed to retreat, the very stones would rise up against us. Therefore, gentlemen, thus it is; bad here, worse elsewhere. Better stay as you are, here in a plentiful country. As to your complaints of losses and fatigues such is the fortune of war, and we did not come here in search of pastimes and amusements."

When they still murmured, Cortes cut them short by saying that according to the old song, "it was better to die at once than to live dishonored."

A peaceful message was finally sent to the Spanish camp by Xicotencatl. The fifty messengers were suspected by the Cempoallan Indians of treachery. Cortes examined them separately, and was convinced that this was true. Spies were most unwelcome visitors in the present state of the Spanish camp. The only hope for Cortes was to persuade the enemy that he was unconquerable. With the horrible cruelty of his time, he cut off the hands of seventeen of the messengers, and sent them back to Xicotencatl with the message that "let him come day or night, he would find out who the Spaniards were." This message had its designed effect. The Spaniards seemed to the natives to read all their thoughts. The sad plight of their messengers humbled the haughty chief. But he knew not what joy he gave the disheartened Spaniards, when his embassy of peace neared the Spanish camp. Four old men advanced to Cortes, and having touched their hands to the ground and offered incense, told the general that they never should have made war upon him, had they not thought that he was in reality an ally of Montezuma. They were followed by the brave Tlascalan general himself. He was a broad and muscular man, his face marked with deep lines, though but thirty-

five years of age. He made Cortes a small present of gold ornaments, for his people were poor, he said; they had neither salt nor cotton, much less gold.

CHAPTER XIV.

FRIENDSHIP AND TREACHERY.

MONTEZUMA had been informed of every movement of the Spaniards. He had watched their onward course with deep interest. It was with feelings of relief that he saw them turn toward Tlascala. He felt sure that, if they were men, this indomitable little nation would prove it by subduing them. But every Spanish victory fell like doom upon Montezuma. His superstitious awe of the strange intruders increased. He felt that he must destroy them if possible. Meanwhile he pursued the same conciliatory policy. He sent an embassy of six of his nobles or chiefs, accompanied by a retinue of two hundred natives, to the Spanish camp with a rich present, some thousands of ounces of gold, and a large amount of cotton cloth. These ambassadors told Cortes that Montezuma was willing to pay their king an annual tribute of gold, jewels, feather work, slaves, and cotton. Montezuma, they said, would like to see so great a general

as Cortes; but his country was so poor, and the roads were so bad that he could not permit him to come to Mexico.

Cortes expressed his thanks for the present, which he said he would repay with "good deeds." The ambassadors earnestly desired him not to go to the Tlascalan capital, for these people were treacherous. At the same time the Tlascalans whispered in his other ear that the Mexicans were in no wise to be depended on. Meantime the confidant of both parties was not a little pleased to see their mutual hatred of each other. The situation exactly suited the scheming disposition of Cortes. "I dissembled with both parties," said he, "expressing privately my acknowledgments to both for the advice they gave me, and giving each of them credit for more friendship towards me than I experienced from the other."

At the invitation of its people, the Spaniards entered the city of Tlascala on the third of September, 1519. Men and women streamed forth from the city to meet and view these remarkable strangers. According to the pleasant custom of the country, they presented the Spaniards with wreaths of sweet flowers. Among the crowd were the wierd priests, bearing little pots in

which they offered incense to the conquerors. The Spaniards were conducted to some spacious courts, around which were the apartments intended for their use. The people seem to have been inspired with real delight; for, in these invincible warriors, they saw a strong hand to revenge the oppressions of the Mexicans. But, in spite of his confidence in their friendship, Cortes did not relax one of his precautions. The cannons were placed ready for defence, and a Spanish soldier neither walked nor slept without his arms. The Tlascalans, jealous lest the Spaniards suspected their good faith, complained of this But Cortes assured them that it was but a custom of the Spaniard, never to be separated from his arms.

Here, as at Cempoalla, Cortes attempted to force his religion on the people. He preached them a zealous sermon on the wickedness of their present practices and the beauties of his own religion. The Tlascalans answered that they readily believed that his was a most excellent god, but they would by no means abandon their own ancient gods. If the Spaniards threw them down, it would be at the expense of their lives. When Father Olmedo, who was a "wise man," heard of this new outbreak of fiery zeal on the part of

the general, he told him plainly that he put little faith in "forced conversions." The destruction of the idols of the natives was but a fruitless violence; for, if they were not convinced by arguments, they would find other means of continuing their idolatrous worship. Cortes finally contented himself with procuring the use of one temple, which he cleared of its abominations and arranged for the worship of his soldiers. The tie of peace was here also confirmed by the gift of some of the chieftain's daughters to the Spanish officers.

Montezuma, the fierce warrior and the crafty statesman of former years, an absolute monarch in the western world, in the heart of his stronghold on Lake Tezcuco, was stupefied with dread at the approach of a new race of men. He saw them forming an alliance with his ancient enemy, and felt that he must do something to save his throne. As well as we can judge from the one-sided history which has come down to us, Montezuma laid a plan to entrap and exterminate the white men. He now sent an embassy to Cortes urging him to come and visit him at Mexico and particularly warning him to form no alliance with the Tlascalans. This message was accompanied as usual with a rich present of wrought gold and the fine stuffs of the country.

After three weeks rest in Tlascala, Cortes set out for Mexico, resolved to go by way of the city of Cholula. The Tlascalans had warned him not to go to this place. But the Spanish general was determined on the route. He sent to the people of Cholula, demanding their submission, for this city was the only one in the neighborhood which had not sent a friendly embassy to the Spaniards. The Cholulans sent back word that they were afraid to enter the country of the Tlascalans, who were their enemies; but, if the Spaniards would only come to their city, they should be well received.

Taking with them some two thousand Tlascalan warriors, the Spaniards set out for Cholula. They were met by a procession of the chiefs and priests, who requested that the Tlascalans should not be allowed to enter their city, as they were enemies. Deeming this a reasonable request, Cortes commanded his allies to encamp outside of the city. The Spaniards admired the broad meadows and fields of maize through which they moved. Before them now rose the numerous shining, white towers, and the great pyramid of Cholula, the largest in all the country. This pyramid stands to-day, and, overgrown with vegetation as it is, it looks almost like a natural hill.

It is built of brick and gravel, and was the especial sanctuary of Quetzalcoatl, the god whose return had been long expected by the people of the country. The pyramid measured one thousand feet at the base, and two hundred feet in height. It was, like all the structures of its kind, divided into several stories. Crowds of pilgrims resorted yearly to Cholula to visit this great shrine. The Cholulans were skilled in useful arts, and especially in the manufacture of a very fine pottery, with which they furnished Montezuma's table.

The reception of the Spaniards in this great city was cool, and they found themselves but poorly supplied with entertainment. Ambassadors arrived from Montezuma, who again refused the Spaniards permission to proceed to Mexico, and conferred privately with the chiefs of Cholula. The natives turned away from the Spaniards with hostile sneers. These, and many such incidents aroused the suspicions of the alert general."

"Be on your guard," was his order to his men, "for I suspect some great treachery." He quietly sent to a neighboring temple, and procured two of the priests. After making them liberal presents, he asked them the cause of this

extraordinary behavior. One of them said that if he were released, he could persuade the chiefs to come and answer for themselves. He was permitted to go, and returned with several of the rulers. Cortes asked what this strange behavior meant, and demanded provisions for his army. The chiefs seemed embarrassed. They promised to send the Spaniards provisions, but confessed that Montezuma, who did not want the strangers to go farther, had forbidden it. Three Cempoallan Indians now sent for Cortes. They informed him that they had discovered pitfalls covered with wood and earth, and that, on looking into them, they had found them set with sharp stakes. Many of the roofs of the houses were filled with stones, they said, and they had seen a barricade in one of the streets. Just at this moment, eight Tlascalans arrived with the intelligence that women and children were leaving the city in numbers, and that the Cholulans had sacrificed seven victims to the god of war on the preceding night. After hearing this ominous news, Cortes quietly returned, and concluded his interview with the chiefs who had been awaiting him. He announced his intention of setting out the next morning, and asked of them, two thousand warriors to accompany him. This they con-

sented to, the more readily that it fell in with their plans.

As far as we know, Montezuma had vacillated in regard to his treatment of the Spaniards. First he gave orders that they should be well received, and then that they should not be allowed passage. Finally, having consulted his gods, he was informed that the Spaniards were to meet their doom at Cholula. Inspired with fresh spirit he had dispatched a large body of troops, some of whom were within the city and some of whom were in readiness without. The plans were all laid. The Spaniards were to be entrapped and captured. Twenty of the victims were to be allowed to the Cholulans for sacrifice, the rest were to be taken to Mexico.

By some means, Cortes induced the two priests in his power to confess the plot, for which he rewarded them handsomely. He now called a council of his men, some of whom proposed flight when they heard of the conspiracy. But Cortes laid his plans before them, enjoined every precaution, and dismissed them.

There was in Cholula a chief's wife who had taken a great liking to Donna Marina. She visited the girl secretly, this same night, and, intimating that there was great danger in remaining

with the Spaniards, invited Marina to return with her to her home, where she proposed to marry her to her son. With her usual presence of mind, Marina thanked her warmly, and said that she only desired to save her property, among which were probably many handsome presents, given her by the Spaniards. Meanwhile she managed to extract the whole secret from the woman. Having gathered together her effects, Marina asked her to watch them a minute for her. She then flew to Cortes, and told him all that she had learned. He immediately sent for the woman, and examined her. The general had now no doubt of the trap which had been laid for him. The Spaniards passed a wakeful night.

Morning broke. There was an unusual hurry in the city. The Cholulan allies assembled eagerly in the wide court-yard where the Spaniards were quartered.

"See how anxious these traitors are to feast upon our flesh," cried Cortes. The stern soldiers must now give them a severe lesson if they ever meant to reach their goal. Having disclosed to the chief men the fact that he knew of their treachery, Cortes gave a signal, and the Spaniards fell upon the Cholulans with deadly slaughter. The Tlascalan allies rushed to the scene, and lent

a ferocious aid. Several thousand natives are said to have died in this massacre. Even when the slaughter was over, the Tlascalans could not be restrained. They roamed over the city, making prisoners and plundering the houses. Cortes forced them to liberate many of the Cholulans, but they still retained a rich plunder of gold, mantles, cotton, salt, and slaves.

Cortes now attempted to restore the city to peace. The fleeing inhabitants were induced to return, the regular successor of the late cacique, his brother, was appointed to the chieftaincy, and, in a few days, the streets of Cholula began to assume their usual busy activity

CHAPTER XV.

THE ENTRY INTO MEXICO.

THE news of the tragedy quickly reached Montezuma. He shut himself up in his palace and fasted for days, calling upon his gods. Cortes sent the king word by his own ambassadors, who had been in the city at the time of the massacre, that he could not believe so great a monarch to have been privy to the treachery of the Cholulans. Discouraged at the ill-success of his plan of trying to prevent the visit to Mexico, Montezuma now sent a present of gold plate and fine stuffs to Cortes, with an invitation to come to his capital.

Meantime the Spaniards were making a short stay in Cholula. Cortes erected a cross upon the great pyramid, and proposed to throw down the time-honored idols of the city. But Father Olmedo interfered, and in consideration of their uncertain circumstances, the zealous Spaniards postponed this outrage upon the feelings of the natives. Cortes now prepared to move on. His

Cempoallan friends asked permission to return, which was granted them. Meantime he accepted the offer of a thousand Tlascalans to accompany his army.

Cortes took every precaution against surprise in the disposition of his forces, as he set out for Mexico. The Spaniards marched, according to the Spanish proverb, with "their beards over their shoulders." The first miles of their march lay through the fertile plains of the plateau of Puebla. Now they neared the two great mountains which guarded the valley of Mexico, Popocatepetl, or "the hill that smokes," and Iztaccihuatl, or "white woman." These mysterious mountains with their snowy summits were regarded with awe by the natives. Popocatepetl, with its smoking crater, its playful way of showering stones, and its low rumblings, was very naturally regarded as a god, while the neighboring white woman was his giant wife. What was their astonishment then, when some of the adventurous Spaniards proposed ascending the volcano, Popocatepetl, which is two thousand feet higher than Mt. Blanc. Cortes, ready to display the superiority of his men, encouraged the project. Nine Spaniards, headed by Diego de Ordaz, attempted the ascent. They pushed up through matted for-

ests until these grew thinner and more stunted, and finally ended in dwarf trees, not as high as a man's knee. They climbed on until there was no vestige of vegetation left, and on up into the regions of eternal snow. The cold was almost insupportable, they were assailed by clouds of smoke, and the ground seemed crumbling away beneath them, from the strange noises which they heard. They turned back without reaching the summit. But they returned bearing as trophies, icicles, things unknown in the mild valleys below, and having been the first white men to set eyes on the distant city of Mexico.

Cortes chose the shortest but roughest road across the mountains, which guarded the valley of Mexico, because Montezuma's messengers had urged upon him the more circuitous road, and the general was constantly on the look out for treachery. The Spaniards made a wearisome climb through the wild gorges, almost perishing under the cold mountain blasts. They fortunately found a hospitable shelter, built by the Mexicans for the accommodation of travellers. Here they rested for the night. In the morning they soon reached the highest point on their rough road. Now, for the first time, they looked down upon the longed-for goal, Montezuma's rich home. The

plateau of Mexico lay spread out before them, with its lakes and its innumerable white towns. There, too, was the fair city of Mexico, with its miles of flat roofs, its pyramids and temple towers. It seemed to be standing in the water, connected to the mainland only by narrow threads of causeway.

"It is the promised land," was the delighted cry of the way-worn Spanish soldiers. After the first burst of admiration, however, their feelings were not those of exultation. It is an impossible undertaking, thought the more timid. How could this little handful subjugate "the great Montezuma," whose city lay before them? Their first impulse was to turn back. Not so Hernando Cortes. His avarice and ambition were whetted by the beautiful sight before him. With a few inspiring words he reanimated his men, and all moved forward down the sides of the Sierra. As the Spaniards descended, they passed through several towns. The chiefs and people flocked to the banner of Cortes, and everywhere complained of the tyranny of Montezuma. As the Spaniards moved slowly on, attended by crowds of wonder-struck natives, they were met by another embassy from Montezuma. As usual, a rich present was poured into the treasury of Cortes, and ac-

companied by an entreaty from the king that the Spaniards would yet return. If they would do so, the king promised Cortes four loads of gold, with one apiece for each of his officers, and a yearly tribute to his monarch. This was but bribing the Spaniards to make themselves masters of such riches. How could he now turn back, mildly answered the general, when he had promised his king to go himself and see Montezuma's city, and bring back an account of it.

Montezuma, indeed, had intended that this message should reach the Spaniards before they entered the valley. When he heard that they were already there, his heart sank within him. He seems to us weak indeed. He felt himself in the hands of an irresistible fate. He might have known the power and unscrupulousness of the so-called civilized nations of Europe by experience from the way in which he was impressed by these few white men who invaded his dominions under the pretense of friendship. He fasted in seclusion. He took counsel with his lords. There was only one way now open to rid himself of the intruders. He could entrap the strangers into the city, cut off the communications and exterminate them. Awed by their repeated and almost miraculous victories, Montezuma dared not brave them

in open battle. He prepared one more embassy to meet and welcome the Spaniards, led, this time, by the king of Tezcuco, who was Montezuma's nephew.

Meantime, Cortes was coming onward by easy stages, passing through various well-built cities and everywhere well received by the caciques, who made him valuable presents of gold. As they were preparing to set out in the early morning from Ajotzinco, the Spaniards were met by a courier who requested them to wait for the king of Tezcuco, who was approaching. Cacama, for that was his name, soon appeared, followed by a large retinue, and borne on a rich litter adorned with green plumes, its canopy supported by pillars of gold and set with jewels. When Cacama had descended, his attendants swept the ground before him. He approached the Spanish general and gave the customary salutation.

"Malinche," he began, for so the Aztecs called Cortes. This was as near as they could get to the name of Marina, and they named Cortes Marina's lord, from their being so often together. Marina excited the curiosity of the natives, being a woman of their own nation and yet so devoted to the Spaniards. "Malinche, I

am come, by the order of the great Montezuma, to attend you to the city,"

Cortes embraced the Indian lord, and presented him with some large false jewels. The Spaniards moved on through a country very wonderful to them. Their road now lay along the lake shore. Here were many smaller cities built upon piles in the water. These towns which seemed to rest on the very surface of the lake, the floating islands, and the gayly dressed natives who darted here and there over the water in their canoes made the scene seem like fairy-land to the Spaniards, and they were tempted to rub their eyes to make sure that they were awake.

They were conducted to the city of Iztapalapan, of which Montezuma's brother was the chief, and here they were lodged for the night in palaces of stone. The Spaniards wandered through their quarters admiring the cotton hangings, the wood-work of cedar and the spacious courts. They walked out into the gardens, which seemed like an enchanted region; for here were beautiful shrubs and plants, wholly new to them, trees laden with fruit, flowers of the brightest colors, all manner of birds, and basins of water stocked with fish.

The city of Iztapalapan was near the southern

entrance to Mexico. The Spaniards proceeded in the early morning of the eighth of November, 1519, along a causeway leading to Mexico. The lake was thronged with the canoes of the natives, eager to see these strange beings who were coming to their city. The natives crowded up on to the edge of the causeway, and pressed the Spaniards on every side. The Spaniards soon were met by a great embassy of Mexican dignitaries, richly dressed. The strangers were kept waiting nearly an hour, while the Mexicans each in turn performed the usual ceremony of salutation before Cortes. The army then moved on amidst a dense crowd. As they crossed the wooden draw-bridge, they remembered the stories that they had frequently heard, that Montezuma only awaited their entrance into his strong city to put an end to them.

Before the Spaniards, lay the broad, straight avenue which ran through the centre of Mexico, Down this street moved the richest retinue they had yet seen in the new world. Montezuma was coming to meet them. He was borne on a magnificent litter carried by nobles who bent their eyes on the ground. Before him walked three lords bearing wands of gold, and behind him was a long train of retainers. As he neared the

strangers, the great monarch alighted from his litter, and came forward, leaning on the arms of his brother and nephew, the lords of Iztapalapa, and Tezcuco. Over him was carried a rich canopy, ornamented with gorgeous, green feathers and fringed with gold and pendant jewels.

All of Montezuma's subjects looked downwards as he approached, with the exception of the princes of his family, and mantles were spread before him to tread upon. His dress, according to the custom of his people, was a girdle or sash and a great square cloak made of the finest cotton and sprinkled with jewels. He wore plumes upon his head and "buskins" of jeweled gold on his feet, while his attendants, though richly dressed, went barefoot.

As the king approached, Cortes dismounted from his horse, and moved forward alone to meet him. He would have embraced Montezuma, but the attendants prevented this desecration of the royal personage. Cortes, however, threw over his head a necklace of colored crystals. The king then touched his hand to the ground and brought it to his face. The two princes, his brother and nephew, did likewise, and the whole retinue followed, each Mexican saluting the Spanish general in turn. An attendant presented

Cortes with two collars of periwinkle shells with gold pendants. After some complimentary passages between the king and the general, the whole procession moved up the main avenue of the city. The crowds of Indians who thronged the street pressed themselves up against the walls, and lowered their eyes as Montezuma passed. Streets, canals, terraces, and house-tops were filled with people eager to see the strange white men. The Spaniards trembled, as well they might, when they thought of the possibility that these peaceful inhabitants might soon be turned against them in war.

Montezuma conducted his guests to the palace of Axayacatl, the whole of which extensive building he devoted to their use. The king led Cortes, by the hand to his apartment, and caused him to be seated on a piece of fine matting.

"Malinche," said Montezuma, "you and your friends are at home; now repose yourselves." With these words he left the Spaniards, who disposed their cannon to the best advantage, and took every precaution against a possible attack. They then sat down "with great satisfaction" to a sumptuous meal.

CHAPTER XVI.

MONTEZUMA AND HERNANDO CORTES.

HAVING left the Spaniards time to dine and refresh themselves, the king, attended by his nobles, again repaired to the palace of Axayacatl. Cortes advanced into the middle of the spacious saloon which had been assigned to him. Montezuma took him by the hand, and they both sat down together while the Aztec nobles and attendant Spaniards remained standing. Montezuma was at this time about forty years of age, tall, slender and well-proportioned. His hair was rather short, and he had but little beard. His face wore a grave expression, but he had pleasant eyes.

"Malinche, said Montezuma, "For a long time we have known, by means of our records, that we are not descended from the original inhabitants of this country. Our ancestors came from a distant land, and the prince of that land came to this country and lived among us for a while. We have long expected the return of his

descendants from the country where the sun rises. From what you say of your sovereign, we conclude that he is that powerful king whom we ought to acknowledge."

"We certainly are those of whom it has been prophesied, great king," answered Cortes. "We are the vassals of a most powerful monarch, called Don Carlos, who has many great princes subject to him. Having heard of the fame and grandeur of Montezuma, he has sent us in his name to tell the great Montezuma of the true religion, the holy Christian faith."

"Whatever is mine is at your disposal," said the courteous Montezuma. "Consider yourselves in your own land, in your own house. Rest and refresh yourselves after the toils and conflicts of your journey, for I have heard of them all from Tabasco to this place."

Cortes offered profuse thanks. Montezuma now made a sign to his attendants, who brought forward the magnificent present which Montezuma never forgot, for he was anything but avaricous and grasping. To Cortes and his captains he gave gold, jewels, and bales of fine stuffs. Among the soldiers he distributed loads of rich mantles.

"I am going to my other houses where I

live," said the king. "I will order that you be provided with everything for your entertainment."

When he had gone, every Spaniard pronounced this a most noble and liberal prince. At sunset the Spanish artillery roared a salute. We may imagine the looks of terror with which the busy native population stopped in their various duties. Even Montezuma could hardly have avoided a terrified start. That night the invading strangers slept on cool, canopied mats in the ancestral palace of Montezuma. In spite of the friendly demonstrations of the day, their guns guarded every entrance to the building, and their sentinels kept up a measured pace around its heavy walls.

On the following day, Cortes requested permission to return Montezuma's visit. This was readily granted, and Aztec nobles were sent to escort him to the royal palace. He took with him four cavaliers, Alvarado, Sandoval, Velasquez de Leon, and Ordaz, with five soldiers. They soon reached Montezuma's palace, for like the older building in which they were quartered, it stood near the great central temple of the city. The Spaniards were conducted through spacious court-yards, ornamented with fountains and filled with Aztec nobles waiting the pleasure

of their king. They entered the great hall where Montezuma awaited them at the farther end seated on low cushions. The room was hung with tapestry of stained cotton, and roofed with spicy woods, while clouds of sweet incense filled the air. The nobles who attended the Spaniards had drawn rough garments over their richer dress, before they entered the royal presence. Now, with eyes cast down, they approached the king. Montezuma received the Spaniards very graciously. With a great deal of compliment and ceremony on the part of the general and the king, the Spaniards were finally seated, and Cortes began his talk. He attempted to explain to Montezuma his religion, the life of Christ, the symbol of the cross, the creation of the world, and the wicked nature of his own idols. We may well imagine that this discourse did not at all please the Mexican king who was especially devoted to his religion.

"Malinche," said he, "I have already heard, through my ambassadors, of those things which you now mention and to which hitherto we have made no reply, because we have from the first worshipped the gods we now do, and consider them as just and good. So, no doubt, are yours. In regard to the creation of the world, our beliefs

are the same, and we also believe you to be people who were to come to us from where the sun rises. There have been people from your country before this, upon our coasts. I wish to know if you are all the same people."

"We are all subjects of the same king," replied Cortes.

"If you were ever refused entrance to any of my cities," said Montezuma, "it was not my fault, but because the people were afraid of you and believed that you carried the thunder and lightning in your hands. I am aware that the Cempoallans and Tlascalans have told you many strange things of me," and Montezuma laughed in a frank way, which charmed the Spanish soldiers. "These people, I know, have informed you that I possessed houses with walls of gold, and that my carpets and other things in common use were of the texture of gold. But you now see that my houses are built like other houses of lime, stone, and timber. They have asserted, I know, that I was a god, or made myself one, and many other such things. But," and Montezuma opened his robes, "you see that I am composed of flesh and bone like yourselves. See how they have deceived you. It is true I am a great king and inherit riches from my ancestors; but, as for

these ridiculous falsehoods, you must treat them with the same contempt I do the stories I have been told of your carrying the thunder and lightning with you."

Cortes answered by complimenting the king on his real grandeur and power. The usual present was now brought forward. Gold and ten loads—one must remember that men were the only pack-horses—of fine stuffs were divided among Cortes and his officers. Montezuma gave the soldiers each two collars of gold and a number of mantles. This was done with an affability and indifference which made him appear a truly magnificent prince, in the words of one of the soldiers who was present. It being now Montezuma's hour for dining, Cortes took his leave. The Spanish soldiers expressed their admiration of the king on their way home.

Cortes had taken the greatest care to keep his men shut up within the palace of Axayacatl knowing that the offences which might ensue from their association with the natives would speedily ruin his schemes. In the perilous game which he was playing, he now deemed it necessary to get a better knowledge of the city and its resources. He had been four days in Mexico, when he requested permission to visit the great

temple. Aguilar, Donna Marina, and a little page of the generals, who already understood something of the language, were sent to Montezuma's palace to make the request. The king readily consented. He knew of the Spanish enmity to the Aztec idols, and fearing lest some violence might be offered to his gods, he resolved to be there, to prevent it. Montezuma accordingly hastened, borne on his litter, to the great temple. He entered, with reverence, within the enclosure where the most of his youth had been spent. He passed across the polished pavement, by the low buildings devoted to the youth and to the priests, and the smaller towers for the worship of minor deities, straight to the great temple. Here attendants awaited him who carried him up the long flights of steps. Having reached the summit, Montezuma retired to one of the sanctuaries for devotion.

Meanwhile Cortes had left his quarters at the head of his cavalry and the most of his infantry. He marched first to the great market of the city. Here the Spaniards were struck with the immense variety of the merchandise offered for sale. One part of the market was devoted to the fresh meats, which consisted of wild game, turkey, fish and the flesh of a species of small dog. There

was also a great variety of vegetables and fruits, Indian meal, salt, honey, and sugar made from the corn-stalk were also sold. Corn-bread, sweet pastry, and various other warm dishes were displayed in the market for sale. Another quarter of the square was devoted to fine and coarse earthen-ware, painted wooden vessels, and tools of copper or bronze. There was also cotton in skeins and woven into every variety of cloth, dyed and undyed, the coarse fabric made from the fibers of the magney, and the paper made from the pulp of this plant. The magney also furnished, in its spikes, needles for the natives, and from its juice was made a fermented liquor called pulque, which is much used in Mexico to-day. Chocolate, tobacco, and liquid amber were offered for sale. There were many merchants in gold, silver, jewels, and feathers. Dressed deer-skins were also sold. Fire-wood was piled here and there, and stone and lime were deposited along the sides of the neighboring canals. Men sat in the market place hewing blades out of stone. Among the articles of merchandise in the market were slaves, fastened together by their collars attached to long poles. The Spaniards eyed this thriving scene with the utmost curiosity and admiration.

Cortes now proceeded to the temple. The white men passed for the first time within the 'wall of serpents." They looked curiously at the gardens and strange buildings around them; but they were especially struck with a near view of the great temple, second only in size to that of Cholula. At the foot of the pyramid were six priests and two nobles, who had been sent down by the king to carry the Spanish commander up the steps. Cortes politely declined, however. The strangers mounted flight after flight of steps winding around the temple at the top of each stairway. Some of the soldiers counted a hundred and fourteen steps to the summit. As Cortes reached the broad platform on top of the pyramid, Montezuma came out from one of the two sanctuaries, and advanced to meet the general.

"I fear you are weary, Malinche, with climbing our great temple," said he.

"The Spaniards are never weary," boasted Cortes.

All turned now to admire the beautiful view which lay spread out before them. Montezuma pointed out the various objects of interest. Around them lay the busy, humming city with its flat-roofed houses and gay gardens, encircled everywhere with water. They could plainly see

the great causeways which communicated with the land, and the aqueduct which brought sweet water from the hill of Chalpultepec. Canoes were constantly passing to and from the land, bearing provisions. In the distance could be seen the temple towers of many another city. Waving forests, long since destroyed by the hands of Europeans, lent beauty to the scene, and beyond all lay the rugged mountain barrier, while over all rose the glistening peak of Popocatepetl, with its somber cloud of smoke. The eyes of the strangers returned again to the white-washed brilliancy of the city around them. The noise of the bustling market-place below rose up constantly, and could have been heard a league away, they thought. Adventurers who had seen Rome and Constantinople vowed that, for "regularity and population, they had never seen the like."

"What a spot this would be to erect the cross upon," exclaimed Cortes, turning to Father Olmedo.

"Do not think of it, for it would certainly be very ill-timed in our present situation," answered the wiser priest.

"Would you do me the favor to show me your gods," said the commander turning to Montezuma.

The king held a little consultation with his priests, and then led the way into the lower room of a spacious tower. Here stood the altar of Huitzilopotchli, the god of war. Over it was the "accursed idol," as the Spaniards called it. It was an immense image with a horrible symbolical face and great eyes which made the strangers shudder. It was bound around with serpents of gold, and its body was entirely covered with ornaments of gold and jewels. In the right hand was a bow, and in the left a bunch of arrows. Around the neck hung a great chain of hearts made of gold and silver and decorated with precious stones. Before it stood a platter containing five human hearts, which were slowly burning with incense of copal. The walls and floor of the room were stained with human blood. In the second tower was the image of Tezcatlipoca, the creator of the world, made of a polished black substance. He also was literally covered with gold and jewels, and five human hearts were lying before him. The scent was like that of a slaughter-house, and the Spaniards hastened again into the fresh air.

"I do not see," said Cortes to Montezuma, "how so wise a prince as you can worship these absurd and wicked powers. Only let me place

crosses on the summits of these towers and the image of the holy virgin within, and you will be soon convinced of the vanity and deception of these idols."

"I would not have admitted you into our temple," said Montezuma, much displeased, "had I thought that you would have insulted our gods, who are kind to us, give us health, rains in their season, good harvests, fine weather, victories, and whatever else we desire of them, and whom we are in duty and gratitude bound to worship."

Seeing that he had made a false step, Cortes said that it was time for him to go.

"It is," gravely answered the king. "I must remain behind to expiate the insult which has been offered to the gods."

The Spaniards descended to the pavement of the court, which was so polished that the horses could scarcely keep their feet. They roamed around for a while, looking at the religious houses and the smaller temples within the enclosure, and then Cortes led his men back to their quarters.

CHAPTER XVII.

MONTEZUMA TAKEN CAPTIVE.

THE sight of the abomination of Aztec idolatry seems to have awakened the enthusiasm of the Spaniards for their own religion. Cortes requested permission of Montezuma to build an altar in his own quarters. This was granted, and material was furnished him. While the Spanish carpenters were examining the palace for a suitable spot, they noticed a place where a door seemed recently to have been walled up. Cortes ordered it be privately opened. What a sight awaited the eyes of the Spaniards! The door communicated with a room full of riches, a treasure which had been hoarded by Axayacatl, and had come down to Monteznma. The strange news was quickly spread in the army, and the soldiers all went to take a wondering look at the sight. Cortes then had the door carefully closed up as before, and the Spaniards concealed their knowledge of this treasure vault for the present.

The altar was soon erected, and mass celebrated in the Mexican palace.

Cortes' whole undertaking had been rash, adventurous, and romantic to an extreme. It seems as though nothing less than a miracle could extricate him successfully from the position in which he had now placed himself. Were he to undertake to return through a country where the bloodshed he had caused had made him many enemies and where anything like retreat would be the signal for war, and devote himself to the establishment of his colony at Villa Rica, it would be to risk extermination from the natives, on the one hand, and with the certainty of his authority being wrested from him by the governor of Cuba, on the other. Again, were he to await for Spanish vessels to take him home, that he might carry the news of his discoveries to his monarch, it would be but to be thrown into prison while others reaped the rich harvest. With his handful of men in the heart of this great Mexican capital, he could not hope to conquer anything by mere force. Moreover, he must act immediately, for he could not hope with a turbulent, licentious soldiery, such as had worked their own ruin in many another Spanish colony, and a force of the detested Tlascalans to long maintain his friendly

footing with the Aztecs. "And, if Montezuma should take offence," said Cortes in his letter to the emperor, "he was powerful enough to do us much harm, so much indeed that we might be utterly destroyed." Cortes played a desperate game, and he was entirely unscrupulous as to the means he used. He saw, with wonderful shrewdness, one way to acquire power over this empire and its riches. The Aztec was to be governed by terror. It was from fear that he served his monarch and from fear that he sacrificed to his gods. So much were these people under the sway of terror that the missionaries of future years found it very hard to compel them by love or persuasion. Montezuma's own absolute monarchy was his ruin. Without a head the body was as nothing. Thus it was that the unscrupulous Spanish adventurer—for Cortes was this—with wonderful greatness in the conception of his plans, resolved on the hazardous attempt to capture the great Montezuma himself.

The Spaniards had been but a week in Mexico when Cortes took his resolution, and immediately acted upon it as was his habit. He called a council of his men, and laid the difficulties of their position before them. Some were for retreat, and various projects were proposed. But, when Cortes

put forward his own bold proposition, the imaginative minds of his followers took fire, and they joined him in the romantic project. "It were better to die at once in such an undertaking than to risk our present precarious position," said one. "Yes," said another, "though Montezuma is very liberal; for no gift of his, not even all his father's treasure, could compensate us for the alarms and distressing thoughts which fill our minds. Who knows but at any moment we might perhaps be poisoned in our food." Thus the Spanish soldiers reconciled their easy consciences to an act of bad faith against a host whom they had found so gentle and affable, who had loaded them with gifts, and never refused one of their requests.

Cortes appointed the following morning for the execution of his plan. There was little sleep in the Spanish quarters that night. The soldiers prayed for assistance in their hazardous project, and Cortes was heard walking the floor. He had indeed an accusation ready with which to charge the king. While at Cholula he had received word that in a skirmish between one of Montezuma's provinces and the Cempoallans Juan de Escalante, the commander at the post of Villa Rica, with seven of his men had been killed. Up to the present time, Cortes had kept the knowledge of

this affair from his men, dreading lest any discouragement should turn them back. Meantime, the head of one of the Spaniards, it is said, had been sent to Montezuma. Trembling at the sight, he had ordered it to be taken from the city. The natives who had been taken by the Spaniards in this skirmish, had accused Montezuma of instigating the trouble. Now Cortes, in reality, cared not the value of a chestnut for the whole thing, in the words of the old chronicler. But he saw in this event a useful pretext for the adventure of the following morning.

At break of day everything was astir in the Spanish camp. Cortes made a careful disposition of his forces within the quarters, that they might be prepared in case of trouble. He then stationed soldiers at the street corners between his abode and the king's palace for ready communication. Choosing Alvarado, Sandoval, Leon, Lugo, and Avila, with Aguilar, and Donna Marina to accompany him, Cortes sent word to the king that he was about to pay him a visit. Montezuma immediately prepared to receive the Spaniards, it being no unusual thing for them to request an interview. The small band of Spaniards entered his audience hall, as usual, fully armed. Cortes and Montezuma carried on for some time

a "sportive" conversation through the two interpreters, and the king, with his usual munificence, gave the general gold, and even offered him his daughter. At last Cortes said:

"I have been informed of the fate of some of my Spaniards who were killed at Almeria, and that the governor, Qualpopoca, alleges, in defence of his conduct, that whatever he has done was in pursuance of orders from you, which, as your vassal, he could not disregard. I do not believe this can be true; but, nevertheless, in order to clear yourself from the imputation in the eyes of my king, it seems to me proper that you should send for Qualpopoca and the other principal men of his city who have been concerned in the slaughter of the Spaniards, that the truth of the matter may be known and these men punished."

Montezuma immediately called some men, and, unclasping from his arm a small stone pendant carved with the image of the war god, which seems to have been his seal, gave it to them, ordering them to bring the offenders of his sea-coast province to Mexico. His officers departed instantly, leaving Cortes but little pretext, certainly, for what he was about to do.

"I am much gratified with your diligence in this matter," said Cortes, "since I must render an

account to my king of those who have been killed. Meantime, I must request you to come to my quarters until the truth is ascertained."

Montezuma was for a moment perfectly astounded at the impudence of this demand. A pallor overspread his face. Then, summoning up all his dignity, he said: "I am not a person to be put in prison. Even if I were to consent, my subjects would not suffer such a thing."

"I beg you will not be annoyed at my request," said Cortes; "for you will not be treated as a prisoner, but will be in full possession of your liberty. You will enjoy the service of your subjects, who will continue to be at your command. You have only to select an apartment such as would please you in the palace which I occupy, where you will be at your ease, and may rest assured that nothing will be allowed to give you pain or inconvenience, while, in addition to your own servants, my companions will cheerfully obey all your commands.

The conversation was a prolonged one. Cortes gave, as the Spaniards thought, good reasons why Montezuma should comply, while the king certainly gave better reasons why he should not. The Spanish cavaliers grew impatient. The longer the discussion was prolonged, the greater

risk they ran, and, if they did not carry out their project, the proposal of it would ruin them.

"Why waste words?" cried Velasquez de Leon, who had a gruff voice. "Let him yield himself prisoner, or we will plunge our swords into his body. Better we should assure our lives now, or, if we must die, let us die in the attempt."

The rough tone of the Spaniard struck harshly on the ear of Montezuma. He asked Donna Marina what he had said. It was a gentle woman's voice that interpreted the hard words to him.

"I beg that your majesty will immediately consent," said Marina, "and go where you will meet all respect and honor; for I perceive that if you hesitate, they are resolved to put you to death."

"I have three legitimate children, a son and two daughters," said Montezuma, with a last effort. "Take them as hostages, in my place, but do not expose me as a prisoner before my own people."

"Nothing but what we originally proposed will do," answered the stern general.

Montezuma finally expressed his willingness to go. He immediately gave orders that his rooms

should be handsomely fitted up in the old palace. The Spaniards asked his pardon for what had passed, and begged that he would tell his followers that it was done by his own free will, and according to the mandates of his gods. The weak and gentle king, who seems, from the first, to have been so strangely under the influence of the white men, was overwhelmed with grief. His nobles came to him stripped of their robes, which they carried on their arms. With tears in their eyes and amid a solemn silence, they placed him on his litter of state, and, with bowed heads, carried him from his own palace, which he was never again to enter. There was some little disturbance in the streets at this strange sight, but Montezuma with quick pride, as though the removal was made of his own free will, ordered quiet. He was received in the palace of Axayacatl with due respect, and conducted to his apartments, which had been furnished with all the luxuries of a Mexican palace, tapestries of fine cotton and feather work, mats, canopies and low seats.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MONTEZUMA AS A PRISONER.

THE king was soon waited on by his relatives and the nobles of Mexico. They were astonished at this strange step, and inquired if they were to attack the Spaniards. But Montezuma said that he had only come here for a few days visit, of his own accord, and they were forced to accept this explanation. He held court and was attended here, just as he had been in his old palace. Those of his women and of his family whom he wished to see, visited him or remained with him, and his officers came as usual to learn his commands in regard to the government of the kingdom. Ambassadors, chiefs, and princes frequently waited on Montezuma. No matter how high their position, they always put on the robe of coarse neguen, and approached the king with downcast eyes, making the usual formal obeisance. The Spaniards also paid the greatest respect to the captive king. A soldier never entered Montezuma's presence without doffing

his hat. Even Cortes observed this respectful courtesy, and neither he nor his men sat down in the presence of the king.

After some fifteen or twenty days Qualpopoca arrived, borne on a litter and accompanied by some fifteen men who had been implicated in the affair with the Spaniards. They entered the royal presence with the usual signs of respect; but Montezuma referred them to the Spanish general, as he was probably obliged to do. It did not take long, for Cortes to examine them, and sentence them to be burnt. It must be remembered that such cruel punishments were common in that day. When the offenders learned their fate, they confessed that they had been acting under the orders of Montezuma.

When the execution was about to take place, Cortes entered the apartment of Montezuma with a stern countenance, accompanied by a soldier bearing irons. He caused Montezuma to be shackled, and abruptly left the room. The indignity was terrible to the Aztec king. He uttered groans from time to time. His attendants are said to have taken his feet in their arms, and inserted their mantles between his flesh and the iron, and wept over them.

Meanwhile, the execution took place in the

public square in sight of the natives. The sufferers themselves bore their tortures with the same unflinching fortitude displayed by our northern Indians. The Spaniards were all under arms and the Mexicans offered no resistance. Cortes was holding the weapon of terror over them, as well as over Montezuma.

When the execution was over, Cortes returned and, kneeling down before the cruelly humiliated king, loosened his bonds. With those soft words which he knew so well how to apply after harsh treatment, he assured Montezuma that he loved him like a brother. The Spanish general now ostentatiously offered the king his liberty, but Montezuma understood well the emptiness of his words. It is even said that the interpreters informed him at the same time that they made the offer, that, though Cortes would permit him to leave, his captains would not. Montezuma answered that he would remain where he was, in order to prevent insurrection and bloodshed in the city. The tears ran down his cheeks as he spoke. On hearing this answer, Cortes threw his arms around Montezuma's neck, and "protested that he loved him as himself."

The king, it is said "was wise enough to know the worth of" such protestations. Under

this ostentatious pantomine, did the Spanish adventurer and the Mexican king hide their real thoughts, and hopes, and fears. Montezuma is almost incomprehensible from the one-sided accounts that we have of him. The Spaniards themselves, from previous accounts, had expected to find him hard and haughty. On the contrary, he was gentle and almost effeminate. He was perhaps like his people, patient until aroused,—then fierce and persistent. But Montezuma, was the first to be caught and crushed by the oncoming wave of European civilization, which was to sweep over the continent.

It being necessary to place a new governor at Villa Rica, Cortes appointed one Grado, a man of but little courage, who had been always one of the chief ones in besetting the general to return. "Now, Señor de Grado," ironically exclaimed Cortes, "go and possess your wishes; you are commandant of Villa Rica, and mind I charge you on no account to go out and fight the wicked Indians, nor let them kill you as they did Juan de Escalante."

"All the world could not have got him to put his nose out of the town," says Bernal Diaz. Such a man as this was hardly to be trusted even with a post where there was nothing to

be done. He soon intrigued to place Villa Rica in the hands of Velasquez. Cortes found it very important to have a trustworthy officer at that post for the incensed governor of Cuba was likely at any time to try to wrest the settlement out of his hands. He accordingly recalled Grado, and appointed Gonzalo de Sandoval, a courageous young cavalier, in his place.

Montezuma was now uniformly treated with the greatest respect. He requested of Cortes a page, who with the quickness of youth had learned the Mexican tongue. He kept this page constantly about him and amused himself by the hour in questioning him with regard to the peculiarities of Europe. When Montezuma arose in the morning he first attended his devotions. Having eaten a light breakfast of vegetables, he then transacted the business of his realm for an hour or more. Immediately after the celebration of mass, Cortes always waited on him attended by all his officers, and asked him if he had any commands for them. The king usually thanked him, and said that "he found everything perfectly to his satisfaction." Cortes would then remain for a while in the company of the king. Sometimes they engaged in a discussion upon the religion of the Spaniards or the power of

their emperor. Sometimes they played together a game called totoloque. It consisted in throwing little golden balls at certain figures made of gold. Montezuma staked valuable trinkets, such as jewels. If the king won he always gave his winnings, to the soldiers of the Spanish guard which was constantly in his apartment. Cortes, in turn, gave his winnings to Montezuma's attendants. On one occasion, Cortes and Alvarado were playing against the king and his nephew. Montezuma had nick-named Alvarado Tonatiuh, or "the sun," on account of his handsome face.

"I will not permit Tonatiuh to mark," said the king jokingly, "because he does not always say what is true."

The Spaniards immediately burst into a laugh at the expense of the handsome cavalier; for he was much given to exaggeration. Such simple anecdotes, told by the soldier who was present, give us an insight into the daily life of the captive Mexican king.

Montezuma soon made himself greatly admired by the Spanish soldiers. A day never passed without his lavishing presents upon his guard. He was particularly fond of Velasquez de Leon, who was the captain of his guard, and

was very attentive to the king. One night a soldier of the guard spoke disrespectfully of the king within his hearing. Montezuma was highly offended. He questioned his Spanish page as to who the man was. The youth assured him that he was but "a man of low birth, who knew no better." At this the king became very curious about rank among the Spaniards, and put many questions to his page. On the next day he caused the rude soldier to be brought before him. Having rebuked him, he gave him a present of gold. The fellow was more impressed by the gold than by the rebuke. The following night, when he was again upon guard, he was guilty of the same piece of rudeness, hoping he would again get a present. Highly incensed, Montezuma complained to Velasquez de Leon who immediately administered a severe reprimand to the speculative soldier.

At another time, a man who did not relish the rigorous duties which the guarding of so valuable a captive imposed upon them cried out,

"Curse this dog of an Indian, who gives us so much trouble."

Montezuma, having over heard this rough speech, succeeded in discovering what it meant. He complained of it to Cortes who sentenced

the man to a severe whipping. This example had a good effect, and, after this, the guard kept silence to the great satisfaction of the punctilious king. Montezuma soon learned to know the soldiers, and called them all by name, treating them with the greatest kindness.

CHAPTER XIX.

INSURRECTION OF THE MEXICAN PRINCES.

IN spite of his great hostage, Cortes felt uneasy lest he should sometime find himself caught, shut up within the city of Mexico, without any means of reaching the mainland. He therefore asked Montezuma's permission to build two vessels for pleasure sailing on the lake. The king was pleased with the idea of seeing an example of the white man's sailing craft, and readily consented. Iron and rigging were brought from Villa Rica, where the salvage from the destroyed ships had been stored. Montezuma granted wood and carpenters. The army possessed in Martin Lopez a good ship builder, who superintended the native carpenters, and the work went rapidly ahead.

Montezuma's pride was great. He could not bear that his own people should know of his humiliating position. He held court, and lived exactly as he had formerly done; but one thing plainly showed that he was a prisoner. The de-

vout king was no longer seen worshipping in the great temple. One day, Montezuma requested permission of Cortes to visit the temple, "in order,' he said, "that my subjects may see that I live among you by the order of my gods and by my own choice."

"You may go," sternly answered the general, "but, in doing so, it is your business to beware how you do anything whereby you may lose your life; for I will send a guard of soldiers with you, to whom I will give strict orders to kill you, instantly, in case there appears anything like a commotion."

Cortes had also forbidden any human sacrifice on this occasion; but four victims had been killed the night before, probably in anticipation of the event. It was not in the power of the Spaniards in their own precarious position to enforce such rules very strictly. Montezuma's state-litter was brought: obsequious nobles attended him with bare feet and downcast eyes. A hundred and fifty soldiers, under Velasquez de Leon, Alvarado, Avila, and De Lugo, were drawn up as an escort. Before starting, the king scattered gifts to Mexicans and Spaniards alike. The procession then set out with great pomp. The Mexicans again saw their monarch in public, but he was

under the stern eye of the white man. Again the Spaniards entered the "wall of serpents," again the clatter of horses hoofs, a strange sound on the pavements of Mexico, worn only by the incessant tramp of human feet, resounded in the sacred precincts of priest and idol. Montezuma was received at the foot of the temple by the priests. They assisted him up the stairways. We can imagine something of his petitions before his gods. When he had performed his devotions, Montezuma descended, and was borne back again. He returned in great good humor, and distributed presents among all who had attended him.

Meantime the new ships were finished and launched. Awnings were stretched over their decks, and they were manned with experienced sailors. Montezuma had expressed a desire to hunt again in his private hunting grounds. They were on the opposite shore of Lake Tezcuco, and Cortes proposed to convey the king and his attendants there, on board of the new ships. Montezuma was pleased to try for himself the strange vessels. The king and his suite were put on board the swiftest sailing brigantine, while his son and a number of nobles occupied the other one. Two hundred soldiers were ordered out for the occasion, under command of De Leon, Al-

varado, Olid, and Avila, all of them "men with blood in their eyes," as Bernal Diaz expresses it. A fleet of smaller boats surrounded the ships. The wind was fresh, and the sailors took delight in exhibiting their skill before Montezuma. The canvas filled, and the little vessels got under way. They sped over the lake, leaving the native canoes far behind them. How exhilarating the speed of motion must have been to Montezuma, who had never been carried in anything swifter than a litter or a canoe. He watched with delight the skilful manipulation of the boats by the sailors. Arrived at his hunting ground, the king amused himself for a time with this, his favorite sport. Having killed a quantity of deer and rabbits, he returned again to the vessels. The artillery was discharged on the homeward voyage, for his amusement. "He delighted us all," said Bernal, "by his affable and friendly behavior."

One day a hawk flew through the king's apartments, pursuing a smaller bird. The Spanish officers admired the beauty of the bird of prey. Montezuma was curious to know of what they were talking. Their conversation was explained to him and also how the Europeans tamed hawks and hunted with them. The king

said he would have the hawk caught for them. He gave directions to his hunters, who by the following morning had caught the bird and brought it to the Spanish officers. "It is not possible," says the soldier Bernal Diaz, "to describe how noble Montezuma was in everything he did, nor the respect in which he was held by every one about him."

Meantime, what were the Mexican people doing that they were so patient under this foreign rule? They, too, perhaps, were oppressed by the dread superstition which weighed upon the mind of their king. But there was discontent among the nobles at Montezuma's attitude. His nephew, Cacama, king of Tezcuco, being now certain that Montezuma was a prisoner and hearing that he had opened the royal treasure-vault in his father's palace, was especially disgusted with the state of affairs.

Cacama was an ambitious young man, and he formed a conspiracy with some princes and nobles to deliver the kingdom from the hands of the Spaniards. He fell into a dispute with one of the princes, however, as to which of them should have Montezuma's throne. By this means the plot reached the ears of Cortes and Montezuma. The king immediately forbade any such step.

Cortes proposed to him to head with his troops a Mexican army which should march upon and destroy the city of Tezcuco; but Montezuma would not listen to such a proposal. Cortes then sent a friendly message to Cacama asking him to desist from his warlike preparations, as he wanted to be a friend to him.

"I am not to be duped like others by plausible words," was Cacama's response. "I expect soon to see you, and then you may say what you will to me."

Cortes again sent word to Cacama that, if he proceeded in hostilities, he would cause the loss of the king's life. Cacama answered that he cared neither for Montezuma, nor for Cortes; for he was determined to persevere. Cortes now laid some plans before Montezuma to which the king agreed. He sent his nephew word that he was in the Spanish quarters of his own free will and in accordance with the advice of his gods. But the king of Tezcuco understood perfectly well the way in which such a message had been obtained. He boldly answered that he was determined to attack the Spaniards within four days. Cacama said openly that his uncle was but "a pitiful king, no better than a hen." As for him, "he was determined to avenge the

wrongs of Montezuma and of his country, and that, if in so doing, the throne of Mexico fell to his lot, he would liberally reward his supporters." Some of the nobles had scruples against acting thus without the consent of their monarch. They proposed to send to Montezuma for instructions; but Cacama, enraged, made several of them prisoners and thus intimidated the rest. He also sent a message to Montezuma, reproaching him for falling into disgrace by connecting himself with wizards and magicians whom he would speedily put to death.

Montezuma was incensed at his nephew's insolent message, and this served to further the plans of Cortes. The king took the seal from his wrist, and sent it to certain dissatisfied Tezcucan nobles, telling them to capture Cacama and bring him there. Montezuma laid a plot by which Cacama was induced to attend a conference of nobles in a certain palace of his, which overhung the lake so that boats could pass under it. Canoes were stationed in readiness, and, at an appointed moment, Cacama was seized and hurried into a boat before a rescue could be attempted. An escort of boats hastened him over the lake: he was placed in a litter and borne to Montezuma's apartments. This king after

reprimanding him, delivered him into the hands of Cortes, who found himself in possession of another valuable hostage. Cortes now suggested to Montezuma that he should appoint a younger brother of Cacama's to the throne of Tezcuco, which was accordingly done. Some of the confederate nobles were arrested, and the Spaniards had escaped another danger.

Cortes now pressed Montezuma to give in his allegiance to the emperor of Spain. The king promised to summon his vassals for this purpose. He sent messengers to every part of his kingdom, and within ten days nearly all the caciques were assembled. Some few refused to attend so humiliating a meeting. Montezuma's page was the only Spaniard present. The king spoke.

"You all know," said he, "that in our ancient prophecies we are told that, from those parts where the sun rises, men were to come to rule the country, and with their advent our empire should cease. I believe these men to be those spoken of in the prophecies. I have sacrificed to my gods, requesting an answer, in vain. They have but referred me to former answers. Whereby I conclude their will to be that obedience should be yielded to the king of these strangers. I now beseech you to give them some token of

submission. They require it of me. Let no one refuse. For eighteen years that I have reigned, I have been a kind monarch to you. You have been faithful subjects to me. Since my gods will have it so, indulge me by this one instance of obedience."

Montezuma concluded his speech, bowed down with grief. The caciques sighed and wept. They said that they would do whatever he desired. He then sent word to Cortes that he and his vassals would tender formal submission on the following day. This meeting was attended by Cortes and the principal men of his little army. As on the day before, Montezuma addressed the nobles, asking them to give their allegiance to the Spanish monarch. His voice was broken by tears and sobs, "more than becomes a man to exhibit," said Cortes. For some time after Montezuma stopped speaking, his vassals wept so that they could not answer him. Even the stern Spaniards could not keep back their tears at such a sight. The Aztec lords finally swore allegiance to the Spanish emperor, and this act was duly recorded by a royal notary.

CHAPTER XX.

DIVISION OF TREASURE.

It is easy to conjecture that the first use that the Spanish plunderers made of this newly-acquired power over the Mexicans was to procure gold. Cortes learned from the king the position of his most valuable gold mines, and sent out men to explore them. He also represented to Montezuma that a contribution from the Mexican empire would be very acceptable to the Spanish emperor. We may well believe that Montezuma could not do otherwise than act on the suggestions of the Spanish general. He immediately sent out his officers to collect taxes, at the same time telling Cortes that he must not expect much gold from those provinces which did not possess gold mines. Within twenty days, a rich tribute had been collected. Montezuma immediately summoned a meeting of the Spaniards and, turning it over to them, said:

"Take this gold, which is all that could be collected on so short a notice, and also the treasure

which I derive from my ancestors, and which I know you have seen. Send it to your king, and let it be recorded in your annals that this is the tribute of Montezuma. What I now give you is the last of the treasure that remains with me."

The Spanish soldiers doffed their helmets, and expressed their thanks. The secret treasure vault was opened, and all its riches surrendered to the Spaniards. This last great gift of the Mexican king was estimated at a hundred thousand ducats in value. Much of the gold had been worked up in a fantastic manner by the Aztec goldsmiths. The Spaniards were three days busily employed in separating it in pieces, which made three great piles on the floor. Much of the gold was melted into bars, while that of the finest workmanship was reserved as it was.

The soldiers clamored for an immediate division of the spoil, which was destined to prove only an object of contention. A fifth of the treasure was laid aside for his majesty, another fifth for Cortes, a portion to pay for the expenses of fitting out of the fleet in Cuba, and in payment for the ships, another portion for the expenses of the agents who had been sent to Spain, still another portion for the soldiers at Villa Rica, and another for the captains and the priests. Double

shares were also apportioned the cavalry, musketeers, and cross-bowmen, and, as may be imagined, what was left for the common soldiers was but small, compared with their high expectations. Loud murmurs arose. Some would not stoop to pick up what had been allotted them. Those who were loudest in their complaints were secretly silenced by Cortes, with bribes. Cortes and his captains had much of their gold made into heavy chains by Montezuma's goldsmiths. The general also had a service of plate made for his use. Some of his favorites had lined their pockets well. Cards were manufactured of drum heads, and deep gambling went on day and night in the Spanish camp. The ill-gotten treasure worked nothing but evil to those who had grasped it It had been "badly divided," says Bernal Diaz and was "worse employed."

When the smothered discontent burst into flames, Cortes called his men together, and, says the soldier chronicler, "gave us a great many honied words, which he had an extraordinary facility for doing." He wondered, he said, "how men could be so solicitous about a little paltry gold, when the whole country will soon be ours, with all its rich mines of which there is enough to make you all great lords and princes."

Velasquez de Leon, having some very large chains and ornaments in the hands of the goldsmiths, was accused by the treasurer of having unfairly possessed himself of gold before the division of the treasure. De Leon declared that Cortes had given it to him. He and the treasurer fell to quarrelling, and drew their swords. Before any one could interfere, they had dealt each other several blows. Cortes immediately arrested them both. He released the treasurer, on account of his office, and privately desired Velasquez De Leon to submit for the sake of appearances. Montezuma heard the clanking of the prisoner's chains, as he walked up and down his apartment. He inquired who it was, and when he found that it was Velasquez De Leon, for whom he entertained a friendship, the kind-hearted king interceded with Cortes in his behalf.

"Oh, Velasquez is a mad fellow," said the general, laughing, "and, if I did not keep him confined, he would go up and down the country robbing the king's subjects of their gold."

"If it is only on that account that he is imprisoned," said Montezuma, "I will supply his wants. So, I beg of you to release him."

Cortes acceded, but pretended to do so only for the king's sake. He made a feint of banish-

ing De Leon; but this cavalier was only gone some six days when he returned, richer than ever by means of the king's bounty.

The Spaniards had long watched with impatience the open idolatry of the Mexicans. Emboldened by his great power, Cortes determined to plant the symbols of his religion upon the very summit of the great temple. He waited upon Montezuma to inform him of his intentions The king earnestly begged to be allowed to consult his priests. Seeing his agitation, Cortes motioned the Spanish soldiers from the room, and, retaining only Father Olmedo, held a private interview with Montezuma. The king, after a long conversation, sorrowfully consented to allow an altar and crucifix to be placed upon the great temple, on condition that no damage should be done the idols. He was present at the ceremony, which he in no wise relished. Whether the idols were left unmolested at this time or not is uncertain; for there are two accounts of the event, which differ in this respect.

Human nature will endure any thing rather than an attack on its prejudices. Their king might be seized, their nobles imprisoned, their revenues appropriated; but that the great structure reared to the honor of Huitzilopotchli, whom

their fathers had worshipped, should be desecrated by strangers touched the most sacred prejudices of every man, woman, and child in Mexico. Every little source of personal irritation in the conduct of the Spaniards was added to the religious insult. The priests fanned the smothered flame. It was not to be expected that they would see the sacred precincts of their temple invaded without indignation and resentment. Montezuma was himself faithfully devoted to the belief of his fathers. He became moody and silent. He was frequently seen to hold conferences with his priests and chiefs, to which even the favorite page was not admitted, Affairs assumed a gloomy aspect for the Spaniards. They were in a state of constant alarm.

Montezuma went into the court yard one day, accompanied by some of his nobles, and sent a message to Cortes, summoning him into his presence. The general was surprised, He had visited Montezuma daily but the king had never before sent for him.

"I do not like this novelty," said he. "Please God there may be no mischief in it.' He immediately went to Montezuma.

"Malinche, my gods are angry with me," said the king in much distress. "I am grieved

that it is so; but it is their determination that you shall be put to death or expelled from Mexico. I am your friend, as you well know, and I implore you on no account to run the risk; but to save your lives while you may."

The kind-hearted king could not find it in his heart to prove treacherous to these strangers, for whom he had formed a certain attachment. Cortes could with difficulty conceal his uneasiness. But he immediately expressed his readiness to leave Mexico. "There are two things, however, that I have to regret in such a case," he added, with great presence of mind. "One is that I have no ships, and must build them before I can leave."

"I will furnish carpenters to assist you," said Montezuma.

"The other objection is," continued Cortes, "that I will have to take your majesty with me if I go."

This announcement produced great distress and dejection on the part of the king.

"I entreat your majesty," said Cortes, "that you will restrain your priests and warriors, and endeavor to appease your gods, provided it is not by human sacrifice, until I can build three ships. If this is not acceded to, we are all resolved to die to the very last man."

Accordingly Spanish ship-builders and native carpenters were sent to Villa Rica to build the ships, and Cortes gained a respite, in which he probably hoped to find some better road out of his difficulties. A dark cloud seemed gathering over the Spaniards. Donna Marina daily gained some new piece of menacing information. Montezuma's Spanish page also was dejected, and frequently in tears from the portentous hints which constantly reached him from those nearest the person of Montezuma. The little band of Spaniards kept a wearisome watch. They slept in their armor, and their horses stood always saddled and bridled. So accustomed did they become to these habits of watchfulness, that Bernal Diaz says that, long years after, he always got up several times during the night, and walked back and forth as he used to do when on guard.

CHAPTER XXI.

VELASQUEZ INTEFERES.

It was now late in the spring of 1520, and Montezuma had been some six months a prisoner. Meantime, the envoy of the discoverers had reached Spain, only to be subject to various delays. The rich treasures of Mexico were duly admired; but Charles the Fifth was on the way to his imperial dominions in Germany, and the quarrels of the rulers and the rights of the conquerors in the new world were neglected in the hurry of embarkation. Meantime, Fonesca, bishop of Burgos, who had control of that department of the government relating to the colonies in the new world, was about to be connected by marriage with Velasquez, and consequently favored the latter's pretentions. But Velasquez, enraged by the knowledge that Cortes had despatched a richly-laden vessel directly to Spain, had not waited for any further authority. He had exerted himself to the utmost, and raised the largest fleet yet manned in the new world. He had

visited in person every considerable town in the island of Cuba, to gain recruits for the new expedition. The repute of the riches of Mexico was sufficient to make men eager to embark for this country, and Cuba seemed almost depopulated of white men in manning the new armada.

Meantime the royal Audience at St. Domingo, hearing of the ambitious project of Velasquez, and fearing lest the interests of the government should be compromised by such a proceeding, sent one of their number, the licentiate Ayllon, to Cuba, to stay the sailing of the fleet. He found the governor at the western extremity of the island busily employed in preparations for embarkation. Ayllon's representations had no effect on the determined governor. Unable to stop the proceedings against Cortes, Ayllon embarked on board the fleet, hoping by his presence to prevent a fatal collison between the two forces.

The new armada consisted of eighteen vessels, under the command of Panfilo de Narvaez, described as a "tall, stout-limbed" person, "with a large head and red beard, an agreeable presence, and a deep and sonorous voice, as though it rose from a cavern." He had already had some experience in the relentless Indian warfare of the

islands. The expedition was well supplied with heavy guns and ammunition. There were eighty horsemen, eighty arquebusiers, a hundred and fifty cross-bowmen, and nine hundred men in all. Arrived off the site of the present Vera Cruz, one of Cortes' men who had been sent in search of mines came on board the fleet. From him Narvaez and his companions learned the wondrous story of the march to Mexico, the capture of Montezumà, and Cortes' unlimited power over the Mexican empire. The Spaniards listened in amazement, and Narvaez was filled with jealous indignation.

Meanwhile, native messengers had hurried to Cortes with the news that eighteen vessels had been seen off the coast. Concealing this news, as it appears, from his men, Cortes immediately dispatched messengers to the sea-coast for further information with regard to the fleet. He had to wait fifteen anxious days before a native embassy arrived for Montezuma with paintings depicting the number of men, horses, and cannon of these newly-arrived strangers. Narvaez also sent a private message to the king, stigmatizing Cortes and his men as outcasts and robbers, and promising soon to come and release him. This news seems to have awakened some hope

in the heart of the captive. Cortes, however, pretended to feel the greatest joy at the arrival of his countrymen. He immediately informed his men that re-inforcements were come, and they expressed their joy by volleys of musketry. They soon saw, however, that when Cortes had left Montezuma he became very gloomy. He privately informed his men that he was suspicious that the arrival of this armada boded anything but good for them. The wily general now made good use of his gold to wipe out any dissatisfaction which the previous division of treasure had caused. His men must be attached to him at any expense.

Hearing of the poor little colony at Villa Rica, Narvaez sent Sandoval a summons to surrender by an embassy consisting of a priest, a notary, and a relative of Velasquez. Sandoval, having already heard of the arrival of the hostile fleet, had made every preparation within his power for resistance. The deputation having arrived at Villa Rica, Guevera, the priest, addressed the commandant.

"The governor of Cuba has sent a great force," said he, "at an immense expense, for the purpose of arresting Cortes and all his men as traitors. I therefore summon you to surrender this post to General Panfilo de Narvaez."

"If it were not for the protection that your holy office affords you," cried Sandoval, "I would punish you for this insolence, in using the word traitors, to those who are more faithful subjects to his majesty than either Narvaez or Velasquez. As to your demands, that is the affair of Cortes. Go to Mexico, and settle your business with him there."

But the priest insisted. "Vergara, produce your authorities," said he, turning to the notary who accompanied him, and who immediately began to take out his papers.

"Look you, Vergara," exclaimed Sandoval, "your papers are nothing to me. I know not whether they are true or false, originals or copies; but I forbid you to read them here, and, by heaven, if you attempt it, I will this instant give you a hundred lashes."

"Why do you mind these traitors?" cried Guevara. "Read the commission."

"You lying knaves!" cried the irate commandant, ordering all three of them to be seized and securely bound. He immediately packed them off for Mexico on the backs of Indian porters. Thus the priest, notary, and governor's relative, bound up like so much merchandise, were hurried on through strange cities, by forests, and over

mountains, fresh relays of porters relieving the old ones from time to time. The astounded Spaniards reached Mexico, accompanied by a hasty line from Sandoval, explaining their situation. Cortes received them with every honor, relieved them of their bonds, and apologized for the rudeness of his officer. He entertained them handsomely, and treated them with consideration. Having "lined their pockets well with gold," in the words of Bernal Diaz, "he, in a few days sent back as tractable as lambs, those who had set out against him like furious lions," bearing with them a conciliatory letter to Narvaez.

Meantime, Cortes had discovered through Guevara and Vergara that Narvaez was not a favorite with his officers, and that "gold would do wonders" with these adventurers, whose hearts were more set upon the discovery of riches than upon the authority of Velasquez. Cortes now chose the discreet Father Olmedo as an ambassador to the camp of Narvaez. He wrote Narvaez a letter, representing the suicidal folly of exhibiting their animosities and divisions before the natives, and thus tempting those to fall upon them, who were now ready to do anything to rescue Montezuma. Cortes offered to share his conquests with him, or to submit to him if he

could show a royal commission, which he well knew Narvaez did not possess. Cortes also wrote a letter to Ayllon and to his old friend Duero, who was of the expedition. Armed with these missives and a plentiful supply of gold, Father Olmedo set out upon his mission.

Narvaez had left the coast and marched to Cempoalla. His first act on his arrival at this city proved his incapacity for the management of the conquest. He took forcibly from the "fat cacique" all the gold and mantles in his possession, and also the women who had been given to Cortes' men, and whom they had left in charge of the chief. The cacique was incensed at this, and dreaded lest Cortes should call him to account for it. Narvaez also began to show a penuriousness which disgusted the gold-seeking adventurers who were following his standard. He would say in pompous tones, "Take heed that not a mantle is missing, for I have duly entered every article."

When the first letter of Cortes was received by Narvaez, he read it with angry contempt. Guevara and his companions, however, were loud in their praises of Cortes, assuring their commander that Cortes had always spoken of him in terms of the highest respect. Whereupon Narvaez

flew into a rage, and would have nothing more to say to them. They immediately went out among their comrades, and boasted of Cortes' riches. When the soldiers saw the gold with which they had been well supplied, they began to wish themselves under the other general.

Father Olmedo arrived soon after. He first presented himself to Narvaez, and paid his respects. He endeavored to bring about an arrangement between the rival generals, but Narvaez treated him to so much abuse that he abandoned this part of his task, and went to deliver the other letters, each of which was accompanied by a liberal present. He used his persuasive powers to good purpose among the officers of Narvaez' army, especially as they were backed up by handsome presents of gold. Narvaez, indeed, suspected the real purpose of Father Olmedo, and was on the point of seizing him; but Duero remonstrated in his behalf, and he escaped by virtue of his orders. Narvaez boasted loudly that he was going to march upon Mexico and force Cortes to submit. The licentiate, Ayllon, was shipped home by the indignant commander, who was determined to hear no more of his remonstrances.

What was the astonishment of the natives

to discover that these new arrivals were enemies to the other white men who had landed on their coasts.

Sandoval sent word to Cortes that Narvaez was about to march upon Mexico, and that something must be done. Cortes himself felt the need for immediate action. If the rival generals must fight it out, Mexico must not be the battle ground; for this would be ruinous to all that had been so far gained in the conquest of the country. At the same time, he would run great risk in leaving Mexico in its present situation, and it seemed a fool-hardy venture to march with the few men he could spare against the four times greater forces of Narvaez. But Cortes always faced his difficulties boldly and without delay. He never lay quietly awaiting the enemy, but gave his men the advantage of the attack. He resolved to make a rapid move for Cempoalla, at the same time hoping to effect a compromise if possible. Choosing his bravest and hardiest men to accompany him, Cortes strengthened the palace of Axayacatl by a strong palisade. He appointed Alvarado to the command of the post, and left about a hundred and forty men with four cannon, twenty-four muskets and cross-bows, and seven horses to overawe

Montezuma and Mexico. Before leaving Cortes held an interview with Montezuma.

"How is it Malinche," asked Montezuma "that you march against this other chief, you both being of the same country and subjects of the same king."

"I have not before mentioned the subject of my departure," answered Cortes, with assumed cheerfulness, "because I knew it would give your majesty concern. It is true that we are of the same country, but not true as these others assert that we are traitors. Your majesty will soon see the difference between us, as I hope, by the blessing of God, soon to bring these others back prisoners. Our going need, therefore, give your Majesty no uneasiness, and I hope that you will do the utmost in your power to prevent an insurrection in the city, as I certainly shall, on my return, make those who have behaved ill answer for it."

With this ominous threat, Cortes embraced Montezuma twice, and they took an affecting leave of one another.

CHAPTER XXII.

A NIGHT BATTLE.

UNENCUMBERED with baggage, Cortes and his men made a rapid march for Cempoalla. At Cholula they were met by Velasquez de Leon, who had been sent out with a small force to plant a colony upon one of the rivers running into the Gulf of Mexico. Velasquez had of old been a partisan of his kinsman, the governor, but he had long since been gained over by the politic Cortes. Narvaez had sent him a summons to surrender, but he had immediately started out to join forces with Cortes. This general received him with warm embraces, for he was in dire need of all the forces he could muster. He also wrote to Sandoval, ordering him to abandon Villa Rica and join him at a certain place on the road.

Cortes sent a message from Cholula to the Tlascalans, asking them for a force of several thousand warriors. "If it is against Indians we are ready to go,' they answered, "but if against your own countrymen, we beg to be excused."

Cortes pressed the matter no farther, for he wanted no unwilling recruits.

The Spaniards marched on, sending out scouts ahead. They were met by messengers from the army of Narvaez, bearing his commissions. The principal messenger, one Mata, immediately took out the documents, and began to read them.

"Are you a royal notary?" inquired Cortes sternly, interrupting him. He knew well that Narvaez had no royal commission, and he made this his excuse for not submitting to his authority. Mata stopped reading, and Cortes told him that he would permit the reading of no supposed orders, unless they were indeed those of his majesty, in which case he would submit, prostrate on the ground. Having frightened the man out of reading the commission from Velasquez, which was in reality good enough authority—for the governor of Cuba had received authority to colonize on the mainland since he had given Cortes his commission—this general entertained him in a friendly manner. After using his usual persuasive words and golden arguments, Cortes sent the messengers back to Narvaez' camp, to spread among the soldiers, praises of his generosity and accounts of the gold ornaments which Cortes men wore in profusion.

Sandoval with some sixty men soon joined the little army. He gave an account of his having sent two of his men, disguised like Indians, as spies into the hostile camp. They had gone to the quarters of a braggart officer, named Salvatierra, and offered to sell him fruit. He had paid them with a string of yellow beads, and sent them to procure grass for his horse. They did this and returned to the camp, where they remained during the evening. They heard Salvatierra remark to his comrades, that they had luckily come just in time to get the seven hundred thousand crowns which that traitor Cortes had gotten from Montezuma. At night the disguised soldiers slipped away with Salvatierra's horse, saddle, and bridle, and also a lame horse which they came across. Cortes and his men laughed heartily at this story, and moved on in cheerful spirits.

On first hearing of the arrival of Narvaez, Cortes, with his usual forethought, had sent to a distant province of Montezuma's kingdom where copper was plenty an order for the manufacture of some copper-headed lances for use against cavalry. These lances now arrived, being excellently made.

Cortes and Narvaez had been negotiating for

a personal meeting at an equal distance between the armies, at which the former had some hopes of making a peaceable arrangement. Narvaez, however, plotted to assassinate his troublesome rival at this interview. A messenger was to be sent from Narvaez to make the necessary arrangements. Duero planned that he should be given this commission. He rode to the camp of Cortes with whom he had a private errand of his own. He seems to have made an agreement of partnership with Cortes, when he and Lares, who was now dead, had procured the general the command of the expedition. He now wanted to know if Cortes would divide his rich treasure with him. This Cortes readily consented to do, and immediately displayed immense liberality in his presents. After remaining with the general some time, Duero mounted his horse.

"Have you any commands for me, Señor Cortes?" he asked.

"Only that I wish to remind you," was the reply, "not to deviate from what we have just agreed; for, by my conscience, if you do, I will be in your quarters in three days, and you will be the very first person at whom I will throw my lance."

Duero laughed as he galloped away. We

may well believe that Cortes was not now to be caught in Narvaez' trap. He sent for Velasquez de Leon.

"Senor Velasquez de Leon," said Cortes in his most persuasive tones, "Duero has informed me that Narvaez is anxious to see you in his camp, and that it is reported if you go thither I am an undone man. Now, my dear friend, mount your gray mare, put on your gold chain, wear all your valuables and more too, which I will give you, go to Narvaez immediately, and distribute the gold with which I shall provide you, according to my directions."

Velasquez at first objected to taking his treasure with him, but Cortes persuaded him to do so. Some two hours after the departure of this cavalier glittering with golden ornaments, the drum beat to arms and the army moved on to a little stream where they encamped for the night.

Arrived at Cempoalla in the early morning, Velasquez de Leon was warmly embraced by Narvaez, who felt sure that he now saw a cavalier who would be anxious to join the standard of his kinsman.

"I came," began De Leon, "hoping to make an amicable arrangement between you and Cortes."

"How can you talk of treating with such a traitor," whispered Narvaez, drawing him aside.

"Apply no such epithet to Cortes in my presence, Señor Narvaez," answered De Leon.

"Why, look you, De Leon," persisted Narvaez, "if you will renounce Cortes, I will make you second in command."

"No, Señor Narvaez, I would be a villain, if I quitted one who has done so much for God and the king."

By this time, a number of Narvaez' officers had come in to salute the new comer. His immense gold chain, which hung double on his shoulders, and his numerous other ornaments impressed them with respect, and he seemed to them, indeed, "a gallant soldier." Narvaez was at a stand what to do when Father Olmedo, who had come to the camp some days ago and who, having patched up a relationship with the boasting Salvatierra, was enjoying his hospitality, stepped up to Narvaez, and said, in a confidential whisper:

"Let your excellency order out your troops, under arms, and show him what your force is, that Cortes may know and be terrified at it"

Narvaez did so. This was exactly what De Leon, as a spy, wanted. Before he left Narvaez

camp, he came near getting into a duel with a young man who spoke insultingly of Cortes. But he and Father Olmedo were advised by Cortes' secret friends to get away as quickly as possible, which they accordingly did. Their comrades were resting on a river bank after a long sultry march when the two messengers arrived. They were greeted with joy, and officers and men gathered around to hear their story. Velasquez first told Cortes how he had executed his commission and distributed the gold. Then Father Olmedo, who was a jolly priest, imitated the pompous airs of Narvaez and the bragging of Salvatierra, and related how he had made him believe that he was a relation of his. The soldiers had a merry laugh together, dismissing from their minds the thought that on the morrow they were to meet four times their number in battle,

Meantime Narvaez began to think it time to prepare against an attack. He now declared war against "the traitors" with "fire, sword, and rope." He then drew up his forces on a plain near Cempoalla. It would have been a formidable array for Cortes to face. But the rain poured down in torrents, night was coming on, and Narvaez' troops, unaccustomed to hardships, grew discontented. The officers advised Narvaez to return to quarters,

as there was no danger of an attack from the enemy on such a night, and as the forces of Cortes were entirely contemptible at any rate. Narvaez accordingly marched back to his quarters, which were the principal temple of Cempoalla. He formed his eighteen guns in front of the pyramid. A guard of forty cavalry was kept out and two sentinels were posted on the road to Cempoalla.

Meantime Cortes and his men had arrived in the darkness and storm at the river which ran a league from Cempoalla. Sitting on horseback, Cortes made his men a stirring speech, praising their courage, denouncing the interference of Velasquez in their conquests, admitting the superior numbers of the enemy, but reminding them under what fearful odds they had frequently fought, and saying nothing of their having friends in the enemy's rank, for he wished them to depend on their courage alone.

"We will conquer or die," shouted the men. "Say no more of an accommodation with Velasquez, or we will plunge our swords in your body."

This was exactly what Cortes wanted. He applauded such a resolution, and then gave the directions for the attack. The countersign was "Spiritu Santo." He promised three thousand

crowns to the man who first laid hands on Narvaez, "to buy gloves," as he said. The men had but one wish, and that was for armor. Jackets of wadded cotton might protect them from Indian's arrows, but they were no defence against cannon and musket balls, and gold chains and bracelets were poor protection. Any one of the soldiers would have sacrificed all his gold for a breastplate or helmet on this night. Supperless and in the rain and darkness, the valiant little band set forward. Silently and at a quick pace, they marched to the ford where they surprised the enemy's outposts. One of them they captured, but the other one escaped to the town. The river was greatly swollen, and it was with difficulty that the men reached the other bank. Cortes now hurried ahead, sure that the enemy would be prepared for him, from the flight of the sentinel. He and his men knew the city well They marched straight for the temple, where a fire could be seen burning.

Meantime the sentinel had fled with the tidings to the camp of Narvaez, only to be scoffed at, for the men could not believe that Cortes and his men could be out on such a night "You have mistaken the noise of the storm and the waving of the bushes for an enemy,

they said. But when the little band was heard tramping steadily through the city and the natives brought the alarm, the general and his men hastened to arms. In a few moments, the enemy was upon them. A detachment, according to previous arrangements rushed upon the cannon. Narvaez' men had had time to apply the match to four guns only, which killed three men. In the next instant the Cortes men sprang upon the artillery-men, piercing and knocking them down. A second division, under Cortes himself, closed with the cavalry in the courtyard, and a third under Sandoval sprang up the broad stairway which ran up the face of the pyramid. They were greeted by showers of missiles which produced little effect, from the lack of ability to aim in the darkness. The assailants reached the summit, where a fierce battle ensued. Narvaez acquitted himself with the utmost courage, until one of the enemy's long spears put out one of his eyes.

"Santa Maria, I am killed" he cried.

"Victory! victory! Narvaez is dead," shouted the assailants.

The wounded general was withdrawn into the sanctuary which crowned the pyramid, and here his men held out until Martin Lopez, the ship

builder, who was a very tall man, set fire to the thatch roof with a fire brand. The occupants were soon driven out by the smoke. An eager soldier grasped Narvaez, and his followers submitted.

"Victory! victory! Long live our king and Cortes!" shouted Sandoval's men.

But Cortes was busy assailing those of the enemy's forces who still held out in the neighboring temples. He turned their own guns upon them. One of them was under the command of the braggart Salvatiera, who, immediately on hearing of the capture of Narvaez, was seized with a pain in his stomach. The posts, aided doubtless by the disaffection among their men, were soon brought to submit. The cavalry also which had been posted without the city and which Cortes fortunately had not met soon tendered their submission. The assailants had been aided by a host of fire-flys which filling the air, had been taken by the confused soldiers of Narvaez' camp for the match-locks of the on-coming host. They were both astonished and disgusted when daylight showed them how small had been the numbers of their assailants.

At dawn, Cortes seated himself in an arm-chair and having thrown an orange-colored mantle over

his shoulders, he received the salutations of his newly-acquired troops, who kissed his hands. The air was filled with martial music and shouts in honor of the victorious general. He immediately set about winning the affections of his new troops by his generous treatment of them. He ordered all the horses and arms which had been captured to be returned to them, greatly to the disgust of the victors. Bernal Diaz says that he was forced to surrender a good horse and trappings, two swords, three poniards, and a shield which he had put away in a safe place. Cortes' veterans complained that he lavished all the favors upon these new men, and took no notice of them. Nevertheless, their general understood what was best for the success of their plans.

Hernando Cortes now found himself thus opportunely supplied with recruits, artillery, and horsemen. He acted immediately upon his plans for conquest and discovery. Two detachments were sent out under Ordaz and De Leon to distant provinces. Cortes was dismantling the fleet and quietly making preparations to leave the sea-coast for the interior, when news reached the Spaniards of trouble in the City of Mexico.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MEXICANS IN ARMS.

THERE can be little doubt that the Mexicans had borne the foreign rule and the indignities offered their king longer than they had intended. They had resolved to expel the Spaniards from Mexico before the arrival of Narvaez, and had importuned Montezuma for his consent. Influenced by fear and superstitious awe of these strangely powerful visitors and even, it seems, by a certain affection for them, he had restrained his people yet a little while, hoping against hope that the Spaniards would yet leave him peaceably to the enjoyment of his old honors and power. He had heard with a momentary gleam of joy the news of the arrival of more ships off his coast. Now, surely, the Spaniards could return. But no! Narvaez had sent him a message to the effect that the great chief Cortes was but a traitor, that he had come to subdue him, and would then liberate Montezuma, and leave the country. The hospitable king had

sent the new general a handsome present but seems to have put little faith in Spanish promises. He was in the power of Cortes. He could only await the result. Meantime, "Away with them all," was the sentiment of the Mexicans. They did not want a new army of Spaniards any more than they wanted the old. Narvaez had assured them that he would take Cortes. With secret joy, they saw this bold general leave their city. They knew "Malinche" too well to imagine that he would be captured without a severe struggle. When this had been accomplished, they thought, and the two armies had been weakened by their civil war, they would exterminate the garrison in the palace of Axayacatl, which still held Montezuma prisoner. They would then make a united attack upon Narvaez' army, and completely exterminate the Spanish race in their land. They were undoubtedly plotting the attack which Alvarado, by a rash and cruel deed, brought down upon his own head with terrible force.

Every Mexican month had its curious heathen festivals. In the fifth month, which began on the seventeenth of May, the festival to the god Tezcatlipoca, who shared with the war god the honors of the great temple, was celebrated. This

festival was intended to implore fertility and abundance. The Mexicans asked of Alvarado permission to celebrate the ceremony, as usual. To this he consented although he did not allow Montezuma to leave the palace to attend it, fearful of losing his distinguished captive.

Ten days before the festival, a priest, dressed in the particular livery of the god, passed out of the temple gates bearing a bunch of flowers in one hand and a little flute of clay in the other. He blew upon the instrument, which gave a very shrill sound, first towards the east and then towards each of the other points of the compass. Then, picking up a little dust, he swallowed it. All who heard the sound of the little flute kneeled upon the ground; criminals implored forgiveness; warriors prayed for courage; and every one offered supplications to the god, swallowing a pinch of earth. The ceremony was repeated daily until the festival took place.

On the day of the celebration, the Mexicans flocked to the court of the temple. A new dress had been carried to the idol, and exchanged for the old one, which was carefully laid away in the repository of such sacred relics. The image was newly adorned with gold and feathers, and the curtain which covered the doorway of the sanc-

tuary was raised, that the people might see and adore their god. When the multitude had assembled, some priests, painted black and wearing a dress similar to that of the idol, bore it on a litter through the crowd. The maidens of the temple institutions had made wreaths of dry maize leaves, emblems of the sterility which they wished to prevent. One of these was placed on the brow of the idol. The youths and maidens were then formed in procession, wearing these dry wreaths. They followed the idol, borne by two priests and preceded by priests carrying burning incense, into the temple court, which was thickly strewn with sweet flowers. The crowd kneeled as the procession passed, and the people beat themselves with knotted cords. The image was borne again to its sanctuary, and the maidens ascended the temple in a procession, carrying offerings of gold, gems, flowers, and prepared food to the image.

After this came the human sacrifice which made such occasions very horrible in the eyes of the Spaniards. The strange custom of honoring a handsome slave for a year and finally sacrificing him culminated at this festival. The youth was now led up the temple, and sacrificed according to custom. A grand dance was then instituted in

which the young men of the temple schools and the nobles of the realm took part. At sunset the maidens placed before the god a loaf of bread or cake, baked with honey, which, no doubt, was a Mexican delicacy. The youths of the schools now raced down the stairs of the temple and around the successive platforms. He who could reach the court-yard first was rewarded with this cake, a garment, and the general applause of the spectators. The conclusion of the ceremony was the dismission from the temple of all the young people who had arrived at the prescribed age for marriage. Their younger schoolmates mocked them, and joked them, throwing handfuls of rushes at them, for leaving the service of the gods for marriage. The priests always permitted such sport on this occasion.

Such was the ceremony in which Montezuma had joined every year of his life, first as a youth of the temple school, then as a priest, and, finally, as the great and dreaded king of his people. On this occasion the nobles seem to have celebrated their dance in the palace court-yard for the sake of their captive king. It is said that some six hundred Mexicans were gathered here, though we always feel uncertain with regard to the Spanish conquerors' estimate of numbers.

Alvarado had heard rumors of a Mexican plot to attack and exterminate his little garrison, and it is probable there was such an intention among the people who were determined to rescue their king. The soldiers complained in after years that all the glory of the conquest fell upon Cortes, but we see from this transaction how little their courage would have effected without their wise and politic leader. Without waiting to sufficiently examine the flying rumors, Alva rado determined to strike the first blow. But he did not calculate the consequences and the temper of those with whom he had to deal. The unarmed dancers were suddenly attacked by the Spanish garrison and every one of them slaughtered. It is said that the rude soldiers even took from their bodies the festive ornaments and jewelry with which they were adorned.

Nothing now could restrain the Mexican people. Without waiting for a leader, they rushed simultaneously against the little garrison, killing seven of their number. They were in great peril, indeed, when a cannon which had been previously primed but which had refused to go off, suddenly fired, spreading havoc among the assailants and saving the Spaniards for a time. The garrison were in distress, cut off from water and

supplies. A messenger who arrived from Cortes with the tidings of his victory was sent back with the news that an insurrection had broken out in Mexico and imploring immediate assistance. Meantime, we may imagine the feelings of Montezuma at the cruel death of the flower of his nobility. He felt that it would not have happened, had Cortes been present. He dispatched messengers to the general complaining of Alvarado's cruel assault upon his nobles.

"When we received this news, God knows how it afflicted us," says Bernal Diaz. Cortes gave Montezuma's messengers, a harsh answer. He recalled the detachments which he had sent out on minor expeditions and started for Mexico by long marches, accompanied by some eleven hundred men, having left a garrison at Villa Rica. In his great anxiety, he was angry with Alvarado, angry with Montezuma, and angry with the Mexicans. A hurried march brought them to Tlascala. Here, as victors, they were handsomely entertained and a force of two thousand native warriors was added to their army. On entering Montezuma's country, the land seemed deserted, not a person came to meet the army where before it had been attended by crowds of curious Indians. This circumstance

awakened fresh suspicions in the mind of Cortes. He feared that the garrison at Mexico had been murdered. At every pass, he expected an ambushed attack. Marching with great caution, Cortes soon reached Tezcuco. This city was almost entirely deserted of its inhabitants. Cortes was about to send an Indian to Mexico to ascertain whether his men were yet living when a canoe was seen crossing from the city. In it was a Spaniard who brought word that the garrison was still in existence, and that the conduct of the Mexicans had improved since the approach of the army, though the Spaniards were still closely confined, and suffered for food. The canoe also contained a messenger from Montezuma, who begged that the general would not be incensed against him as the insurrection had taken place without his consent.

On the following day, the army marched along the causeway and through the streets of Mexico, once so thronged, but now ominously empty. The joy of the beleaguered garrison may be imagined. The gentle king met the general and congratulated him on his victory, but Cortes, exasperated by many circumstances, would not speak to him. Montezuma returned sadly to his apartment. The general now made inquiries into

the cause of the trouble which convinced him that Montezuma had had nothing to do with it.

"How did it come that you fell upon the Mexicans while they were dancing and holding a festival in honor of their gods?" sternly inquired Cortes of his captain.

"In order to be beforehand with them," answered Alvarado. "I had intelligence of their hostile intentions from two of their own nobility and a priest."

"Is it true that they had asked permission of you to hold their festival?" asked Cortes.

"Yes! I gave it in order to take them by surprise, and punish and terrify them so as to prevent their making war upon us."

Cortes was fairly enraged when he heard this avowal. He administered a severe reprimand to Alvarado. The politic general, for the first time so far as we know, had entirely lost his temper. Many things exasperated him. In order to induce Narvaez' troops, who were almost inclined to a revolt when they saw how weak their conquerors were, to join him he had expatiated on his own power and influence in Mexico, and romanced a little on the abundance of the gold there, forgetting to mention the immense numbers of the Aztecs. His cold reception every-

where and the lack of provisions at his quarters were so humiliating that he grew very peevish. Montezuma, wounded by the unjust suspicions of the general, sent his nobles to request Cortes to come and see him.

"Away with him. The dog! why does he neglect to supply us?" cried Cortes.

Some of the cavaliers remonstrated with him, reminding him of Montezuma's acts of kindness and generosity. But this irritated Cortes the more.

"What compliment am I under to a dog who treated with Narvaez, and now neglects to send us provisions as you see?" said he. Perhaps he would have been more cautious in restraining his temper, did he not feel so confident of his power with so large a force under his command. He bade the nobles tell their king to cause the markets to be held as they were before the insurrection. They returned to Montezuma, and, having very well understood that Cortes had spoken angrily and applied an ugly term to the king, they reported it to him. Whether, in their indignation, they roused the populace with the cry that Montezuma was being abused by the Spaniards, or whether an attack was already meditated is not known. But, within fifteen or

twenty minutes, a Spaniard who had been sent out with a message came rushing back, covered with wounds, and with the news that all Mexico was in arms.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MEXICANS BESIEGE CORTES.

THE Mexicans were fully aroused and, once aroused, nothing could stand in their way. They thirsted for vengeance, and were willing to throw down their lives by the hundred, if they might but wreak a terrible punishment on the Spaniards. Already, they had destroyed the Spanish brigantines, upon which Cortes had depended in such an extremity. Montezuma's brother, Cuitlahua, had been in the power of Cortes, and the general had but just sent him into the city to demand the re-opening of the markets, that the Spaniards might purchase provisions. But the prince did not return. He was hastily elected general and king in place of the captive Montetezuma. It did not take long for Aztec warriors to prepare for battle. The most of them wore but the sash about the loins. Grasping bows, arrows, slings, and darts, they sprang from every quarter of Mexico, forming into rude battalions and following the feather-work banners which

were hurriedly displayed. The chiefs and nobles who led these forces wore gold breast-plates and feather mantles, while their heads were adorned sometimes with a crown of feathers, sometimes with a helmet resembling the fierce head of a wild animal. The warriors rushed like a great wave through the streets, straight toward the palace of Axayacatl. De Ordas with some two or three hundred men had been sent out to reconnoitre. He was soon met by the oncoming mass. The very house-tops poured down missiles upon their heads. De Ordas was wounded, some of his men were killed, and he could but save himself by an orderly retreat before the irresistible army. This was only accomplished with considerable loss. After and before him the great throng surged on toward the Spanish quarters. The terraces, and house-tops of the neighboring buildings, each one of which was a fortress in itself, seemed suddenly alive with warriors.

Perhaps Spaniards had never been besieged in a stranger fortress than this American palace. Its great expanse of flat roof was sufficient in extent for a tournament of olden times. In the centre, it rose two stories in height, and its roof was surrounded with low walls and towers for the purposes of defense. In its ample court

yards lodged the Tlascalan allies. Destitute of water but for a muddy, oozing spring discovered in the court yard, and almost destitute of food, the Spaniards were besieged by a people whose determination they had underrated on account of their long forbearance. Between them and escape lay this exasperated people and the waters of the lake, for the bridges to the mainland were already destroyed.

The Spanish cannon were stationed along the wall crowning the roof of the palace in which embrasures had been cut for the use of the artillery. This wall blazed a response to the shrill whistles, which were the Mexican warwhoop. The Spaniards need take no aim. Every cannon ball mowed a path through the crowded ranks of the assailants. But the throng pushed onward over the dead bodies of their countrymen, filling up every gap. The streets, the terraces, and the roofs of the houses were densely packed with Mexican warriors. Stones from Aztec slings fell like rain upon the garrison. Arrows and darts soon lay so thickly strewn over the court yards, that they fairly impeded motion. Cortes sallied forth at several points, and fought the Mexicans stoutly but with little effect. He was wounded, as were numbers of his men. The throng of

warriors pressed on. The foremost ones reached the walls of the palaces, where they were sheltered from Spanish firearms. Speedily the building was blazing at more than one point. The Spaniards tore great breaches in the walls, levelled the burning buildings, and threw earth upon the smoking ruins. Strong guards had necessarily to be placed at these points. Leaping upon the bodies of their dead and dying comrades, the Mexicans endeavored to scale the walls. No sooner, however, did a Mexican's head appear over the rampart than a Spanish gun brought it down.

Night-fall ended for a time the strife. The Mexicans rested on their arms in the streets. But, the Spaniards spent a weary night. Besides constantly guarding against surprise, they were busily employed in repairing their breaches and tending the wounded, the general making his dispositions for the following day.

Day no sooner dawned than the Mexicans renewed the attack more vigorously than ever. Though the cannon kept up a continual roar, though the Spanish match-locks and cross-bows did deadly work, their losses seemed to have no effect on the numbers of the Mexicans. Leaving as large a number as he could spare for the de-

fense of the garrison, Cortes sallied out in the early morning, determined, if he could not conquer, at least to make the enemy fear him. The Mexicans met him with equal determination The Spaniards made charge after charge, trampling down the almost naked warriors with their horses, mowing them down with their guns, attacking them with spear and sword. But of no avail. Fresh warriors pressed forward in place of their slain comrades. If they could kill but one Spaniard, where they lost a hundred of their own men, they were satisfied.

Meantime the showers of stones and darts from the neighboring buildings were almost unendurable. Cortes several times captured bridges which he could not hold, and fired houses involving the defenders in the ruin. This desperate battle lasted until late in the day, when the weary Spaniards began a difficult retreat, fighting their way back as they had fought it forward. It is said that, as Cortes neared his quarters, he espied his friend Duero, in a side street, unhorsed and desperately defending himself with his poniard against a ferocious band of Mexicans. Shouting his battle-cry, and driving his spurs into his weary horse, he dashed to the rescue With a vigorous charge, he scattered the enemy

and, assisting his friend to his horse, both cavaliers dashed back through the Mexican warriors to the Spanish ranks. Arrived finally at their quarters, some veteran soldiers swore that neither amongst Christians nor Turks had they ever seen such desperation as the Mexicans manifested.

The live-long night and the following day were spent by the Spaniards in building three great towers, in which it was proposed to shelter cross-bowmen and musketeers, provided with bars of iron that they might pull down the barricades, and loosen the stones of the houses. Meantime, the Spaniards were forced to defend themselves with the utmost vigilance. The Mexicans did not give up their attempts to scale the walls. At more than twenty different points their heads would frequently appear over the ramparts only to be shot down. Meantime they filled the air with their taunts.

'The royal beasts have been kept fasting for two days to prepare them for the meal which they will speedily have over your carcasses," they cried.

"You will soon be sacrificed to our gods, whom you have despised."

"We will put the Tlascalans into cages and fatten them."

"We will soon get back all that ill-gotten treasure."

These taunts were occasionally interspersed with the pitiful cry, "Give us our king, give us Montezuma.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DEATH OF MONTEZUMA.

WHAT must have been the feelings of the captive king! His people were aroused once and for all. In their midst his brother, the heir to the throne, occupied his place, gallantly leading them on to the saving of their country at whatever cost. Montezuma could not but know of the terrible slaughter of his people, of the desperate battles, and the still more desperate assaults. The familiar war-cry, the whiz of arrows filled his ears, amidst the strange roar of cannon and musketry. Did he now regret his own weak submission, or did he see farther into the future? One might almost think from Montezuma's course that he was the one man in Mexico who foresaw the coming scourge of the white men and the impotence of resistance, however energetic, to a superior race with better arms. Certainly he could have no hope for himself either in the case of Mexican victory or Mexican defeat, regarded as he was by the stern Spaniards as but a hostage.

Since his peevish rebuff, the general had had little time to spend in remorseful thoughts with regard to the wounded feelings of the Mexican king. But, in this terrible extremity which had followed so quickly on his former successes, he remembered an expedient by which he might yet tame, he thought, this ferocious animal which roared at his gates ready to devour him. A few words from the honored king might yet calm the tempest. He was now only too willing to leave the city, if he were allowed free passage. He sent a message to the unhappy Montezuma, desiring him to interpose with his subjects. On hearing the message, the king turned away with violent expressions of grief.

"What does he want of me now?" cried Montezuma. "I neither desire to hear him, nor to live any longer, since my unhappy fate has reduced me to this situation on his account. Leave me, and trouble me no more with the false words and promises of Malinche."

Father Olmedo and Christoval de Olid were sent to Montezuma. With the most affectionate and persuasive language, they tried to induce him to comply with their request.

"I do not believe that my doing so will be of any avail," sadly answered Montezuma. "The

people have already elected a new king, and I can tell you you will never leave Mexico alive."

But the gentle-mannered Montezuma could never refuse the Spaniards anything. He was finally persuaded to make an attempt in their favor, hoping perhaps to relieve the city of the Spaniards, without further blood-shed. He put on his robe of state, his golden sandals, and his mitre-shaped crown. Protected by the shields of the Spanish soldiers, he came forward and stood upon the parapet. As soon as the caciques saw who was approaching, they imposed silence. The clamoring of the warriors, the whiz of arrows, the roar of firearms ceased. The Spanish shields were lowered, and Montezuma stood again in sight of his people. He spoke. In affectionate terms he asked for a cessation of hostilities, promising that the Spaniards would then leave the city. Four nobles had approached the wall where he stood.

"We mourn over your misfortunes" said they "and those of your children and family. We have raised up Cuitlahua, prince of Iztapalapa, in your place. But the war is drawing to a close and we have promised the gods never to desist until we have destroyed every Spaniard. Every day we make offerings for your safety, and when

we have rescued you out of the hands of these men we will venerate you as before, and we hope you will pardon us."

Notwithstanding this speech, the warriors were exasperated with Montezuma's weak course. Thirsting to revenge the death of the murdered dancers at the festival of Tezcatlipoca and their mangled warriors who had fallen at the mouth of the cannon, determined to make the hated foreigners, an offering to their gods, they despised the king who could propose to allow them a free path to leave their city. Since his first act of weak submission, he had become more and more unpopular. Hardly had the nobles finished speaking when a shower of stones and arrows fell about the head of the unhappy king. Three stones and an arrow struck him to the ground. When the people saw what they had done a howl of dismay arose, and they quickly dispersed in every direction.

Montezuma was carried to his apartment. Though he was wounded in the head, leg, and arm, his wounds were not necessarily serious. But he refused to live after this disgrace. He would have no surgical aid. He tore away the bandages, when they were applied. He made no answer when the Spaniards endeavored to console him.

Their attention was speedily called, however, from the wounded king to their own situation. They dared not rest or turn away their thoughts from the assailants day nor night. The following morning, they prepared a sally with their movable towers, now completed. These machines were supported by four pieces of artillery, the cavalry, a portion of the infantry, and the Tlascalan forces. The towers were pushed up to the terraces of the neighboring houses, and by this means Cortes attempted to gain these strongholds of the assailants. Scaling ladders were put in use, and every effort was made; but the desperate Mexicans poured missiles and even sharp cut stones torn from the walls of the buildings down upon the Spaniards' heads. An attempt was then made to capture one of Mexico's numerous bridges. It was thronged, however, with sturdy defenders, while every neighboring house-top, served as a vantage ground to the enemy. The Spaniards struggled from early morning until noon without making any progress. They then eturned to their quarters, sorrowfully enough.

The Mexicans were greatly encouraged by their success in resisting the ingenious contrivances and utmost courage of their enemies. The great temple and its inclosure were in the

immediate neighborhood of the palace of Axayacatl and overlooked it. The Spaniards had at first occupied this area with a portion of their troops. Since then they had probably swept it with their cannon. Emboldened by their success, the Mexicans secured this lofty structure. They occupied all the smaller buildings. Five hundred warriors, plentifully provided with provisions and missiles ascended the great temple. Here they tore down the symbols of Spanish religion. From this vantage-point, they looked down upon the roofs, and courts of the Spanish quarters. They were thus enabled to do serious injury to the garrison. Cortes resolved that the temple must be secured at any cost. Two or three times the Spaniards made a raid upon it. They were saluted by a shower of smaller missiles, while great stones came tumbling down the sides. They were also harrassed from the neighboring structures. Time and again the Spaniards made a rush up the stairs, only to come rolling down again.

Cortes resolved on one great effort. He was wounded in his left arm, but, tying a shield upon it, he sallied forth at the head of a large force. He was met in the inclosure by a multitude of Mexican warriors. The Spaniards

attempted a charge upon the Mexicans, but the pavement was so smooth that the horses' feet slipped from under them, and many of them fell. They soon, however, cut their way through to the temple, which was a formidable fortress. Unlike the temple of Cempoalla, whose summit was reached by a straight flight of steps, the Mexican temple was ascended at one of the angles by several stairways, and each successive flight was reached only by walking around the gallery which led to it. Each one of these galleries was well defended by a Mexican force, and, if gained, entirely exposed to the missiles from above. Cortes pushed up the temple stairs, followed by his bravest men. Every inch of the way was contested. Some forty Spaniards had fallen, and all of them were covered with blood when they reached the summit only to be more desperately resisted. Mexican warriors swarmed before and behind them. Several times they were driven down six and even ten steps. Sometimes a soldier went rolling down into the court yard below. Three hours the conflict raged upon this high battle ground. The Spaniards frequently drove Mexican warriors off the edge of the platform, and they rolled headlong down the sides to be despatched by the Spaniards and

Tlascalans below. Still the battle raged. It was not closed until every Mexican upon the temple summit was dead. The sanctuaries of Huitzilopotchli and Tezcatlipoca were speedily in a blaze. The great war-god was dragged forth and hurled from his high throne never to be replaced. The Spanish army then retreated to its quarters, having dealt the Mexicans a severe blow. Cortes followed it up in the night by a sally into the slumbering city and the burning of a number of houses. The houses were so much separated by water and so substantially built that it was an arduous task to set them afire, and the blaze did not readily communicate with neighboring buildings.

Having thus terrified the Mexicans, as he thought, Cortes endeavored to treat with them. He felt quite certain that he could now bring them to terms. He told them that, unless they immediately afforded him a cessation of hostilities, he would persevere in his work of destruction and death, until nothing was left of Mexico and its inhabitants.

"We know well," answered the Mexicans, "that many of us will lose our lives, but we are determined to make an end of you, though we all die in the attempt. You can see how the

streets are filled with people, and, if we lose hundreds of men to your one, we will still conquer. The bridges are destroyed. You can not escape, and we know well that you have little food and less water. Famine will soon finish you if we do not."

This was only too true. No gleam of hope remained for the Spaniards. Active mutiny arose in the camp. The soldiers of Narvaez, especially, cursed Cortes, and cursed Velasquez, and heartily wished themselves well back in their comfortable Cuban homes, which they probably vowed they would never again leave in the mad search for gold.

It was now the third day since Montezuma had been wounded at the hands of his people. He had torn the bandages from his bruises, he had refused food, and had turned away his head from those who wished to speak to him. The unhappy king was resolved to die. Father Olmedo waited on him, and did his best endeavor to persuade him to renounce his gods, and embrace the Christian religion. But it was of no avail. In his last hours Montezuma clung to the religion of his fathers. He had too little reason to think well of the white man's faith.

The Spanish cavaliers had grown attached to

Montezuma. They visited his dying bed when they could be spared from the continuous battle without. Cortes promised him to care for certain of his children. This promise he kept. Some of Montezuma's children who survived the great upheaval of the conquest became the founders of noble houses. Montezuma died. The Spanish cavaliers and soldiers wept openly, "as though he had been their father," said Bernal Diaz "nor is it to be wondered at, considering how good he was."

Perhaps this general sorrow among his captors, who were none too tender-hearted, speaks more in favor of Montezuma's character than anything else. Though a powerful king, he was not a great man. He seems to have alienated his people, outside of his immediate capital, by harsh and despotic measures. He was given to intrigue, and is said to have filched away some of the dominions of his nephew, the king of Tezcuco, in the troubles at the time of his accession to the throne. He lacked the personal courage to lay down his life for his country, when he was met face to face by the stern Spaniards, unmasked of their soft protestations of friendship, and demanding him as a hostage. But Montezuma possessed charming manners. He

was unbounded in his generosity, attached to those who did him a kindness, and gentle and friendly towards all with whom he came in contact. Certainly one would not expect to find such qualities and such failings in the king of one of the barbarian races inhabiting America, before the arrival of the white man, and whom we indiscriminately style Indians.

Cortes sent Montezuma's body out to Cuitlahua, borne by some Mexican nobles, and priests who remained with him. By these he sent word to the Mexicans that their king had died at their own hands. Loud lamentations arose when the people saw the body of Montezuma. Fierce with hatred, the Mexicans would not believe but that the Spaniards had killed him. The king's body, as one account avers, was probably burned in a public square, according to custom, amid the mourning of the multitude. The dire battle again closed around the Spaniards. But though Montezuma is dead, his story, the story of his throne and of his people is not ended.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SAD NIGHT.

THE numbers of the Spaniards diminished daily, while the Mexican warriors seemed to increase. The besieged were weakened by wounds and by want, but the Mexicans daily grew in fury. Montezuma was dead; overtures for peace were rejected; and the bridges for retreat destroyed. The Spanish troops were almost in mutiny. Cortes stood on the brink of the ruin of all his ambitious schemes. But he quietly resolved on the best course to take, where any course was desperate. Cool-headed in time of unprecedented success, he was equally cool in time of overwhelming calamity. He resolved to clear the way, if possible, down the street which led over a causeway to the city of Tacuba.

The Spaniards spent the night in repairing their movable towers. At break of day Cortes sallied forth at the head of his main force. The Spaniards soon approached the site of the bridge where they had been formerly defeated. But

now they fought for the last chance of life. This street and the connecting causeway had led over eight bridges, every vestige of which was now swept away. It was lined with great buildings, surmounting terraces or mounds, each one of which was a fortress of offensive warfare. Here and there the street was blockaded with a great breastwork of sun-baked brick. The battle was desperate. The Spaniards fought for life, the Mexicans fought with the certainty that, if they did not destroy these hated strangers, their land would be taken from them. Cortes burned the houses as he went. He stormed the barricades, and threw their debris, with stone and timber from the blazing houses into the canals, thus making a solid bridge to pass over to the next resting place. At every bridge, a detachment was left to guard the crossing. The Spaniards pressed onward amidst a fierce resistance. By nightfall, they had fought a deadly battle over four crossings, and gained them. They had left some twenty Spaniards dead upon the field, and the wounds of the living were innumerable. They retired to their palace for the night, leaving a strong guard at each bridge.

The sally was resumed on the following morning. The Mexicans had labored hard during the

night to strengthen their entrenchments, and widen the breaches in the streets and causeways. But the Spaniards pressed resolutely forward. Arrived at last at the open causeway, they drove the natives before them. Some of the cavaliers galloped almost to the mainland, "at the heels of the fugitives." Meantime, the main army was laboring to fill up the bridges, when Cortes received a message to the effect that the Mexicans were suing for peace, and desired his presence immediately. The general hastily returned to the garrison, rejoiced at this gleam of hope. The Mexican messengers made a humble speech, and desired that a priest whom Cortes held in captivity, and who was a sort of chief priest in their religious rites, should be delivered over. The priest was brought forward, and assisted at concluding a truce between the two armies. The wearied general now returned to his quarters, where he was partaking of hasty refreshments, when messengers rushed in with the news that the Mexicans had made a ferocious attack on the conquered bridges, and had already killed certain of the Spaniards who guarded them. Cortes' hopes were dashed to the ground. "God only knows," said he, in his letter to the emperor, "with what feelings I received this intelligence.

since I had thought that we had nothing more to trouble us, after having gained possession of the avenue leading out of the city."

Cortes sprang upon his horse, and, followed by a few horsemen galloped down the street to the scene of battle. He had counted on the infantry following him, but they exhausted with their wounds and panic-stricken at the new disaster, failed to do so. As Cortes galloped onward, regaining the captured bridges with a brisk charge, the multitude of Mexicans closed in upon the bridges behind him, tearing away the debris of which they were composed and again making them a gap and pitfall between the Spaniards and their garrison. Having routed the enemy who were attacking his men and having collected his forces into a little band, Cortes sought to return, when he was met by the appalling spectacle of his bridges partly destroyed and a great army between him and his quarters. The Spaniards fought their way forward with intense desperation. The report ran through the city that Cortes was dead. It was a joyful sound of deliverance to the Mexicans; it fell like a doom upon the Spanish garrison. But Cortes was alive, in the thick of the fight, shouting the name of his patron saint

He and his horse, indeed, were well protected by armor, and the enemy's spears and arrows could do them no more harm, he says, than to cause their bodies a little pain.

The Spaniards fought their way back, over bridge after bridge partly demolished by the Mexicans. At the last bridge, Cortes rode up to find his cavalry fallen into the gap, one horse riderless and the remainder baffled in their attempts to ascend the opposite side by multitudes of Mexican warriors who guarded the gap. Making a single handed charge among those of the enemy who were available, Cortes sprang with his good horse over a six foot opening, amid the rattling hail of Indian arms, and having reached the other side, led his men forward to the battered and half-ruined palace of Axayacatl. The Mexicans had come off victorious. Several of the bridges it is true were still in the hands of Cortes but they had regained and destroyed the rest.

The Spaniards could hope for no better success, and, indeed, their situation was likely to become worse by any delay. Cortes dreaded lest the Mexicans would in their determination destroy the very causeway itself. A sort of necromancer or astrologer in the army named Botello, had predicted that, if the Spaniards did

not quit Mexico on that very night, no Spaniard would escape alive. This wizard had also predicted that Cortes would undergo great changes of fortune, which was hardly seeing through a stone wall.

The men in their dire despair were greatly influenced by the predictions of the necromancer. Very likely Cortes himself, living as he did in an age of superstition, was swayed by them. But his judgment also told him, that it would not do to remain longer in Mexico.

The jaded Spanish soldiers returned to their quarters, only to make hasty preparations for a night retreat. It was not the custom of the Mexicans to fight at night, and Cortes deemed this the best time to attempt his escape. A portable bridge was constructed of strong timbers, by which he hoped to effect a crossing for his army, over the gaps in the causeway.

And now the treasure had to be thought of. The soldiers wore their possessions in gold ornaments, about their persons but the royal fifth and that belonging to Cortes and to the richer officers, had been cast into bars and stored in Cortes' own room in the palace. It was now all brought out, and heaped into dazzling piles on the floor of the grand saloon. The soldiers of

Narvaez' army regarded for the first time, with eager eyes, the riches of which they had heard so much. Cortes apportioned a certain number of Tlascalans and some partially disabled horses to carry the treasure. They were accordingly laden with gold and given especially in charge of the treasurer and a detachment of soldiers. Still there remained great heaps of riches, which must be left behind. Cortes turned to his soldiers. "Let every man," he said, "take what he will. Better so, than that it should be left for these Mexican dogs."

Human avarice could not withstand the opportunity. Many of the men sprang forward, and eagerly loaded themselves down with treasure. The soldiers of Narvaez, especially, who had seen so little riches since their advent into Mexico, eagerly fumbled over the glittering piles in this moment of anxiety and peril. Bernal Diaz says, that he, for his part, thought more of saving his life than anything else, and did not choose to hamper himself with uncertain riches; but, when an opportunity presented itself, he seized four of those green jewels so much esteemed among the Mexicans. They afterwards served a good purpose in procuring him food among the natives in time of famine.

Cortes next made a disposition of his forces. One detachment was assigned the care of the portable bridge, which they were pledged to stand by and guard, until all had passed over, when they were to carry it forward to the next gap. The brave young Gonzalo de Sandoval led the vanguard, composed of a hundred picked soldiers. The treasure and artillery were in the centre of the column. The rear guard was under the command of Alvarado and Velasquez de Leon. Cortes commanded in person a reserve force. The Tlascalans were distributed among these bodies of Spaniards.

At midnight, about the first of July 1520, the Spaniards moved for the last time from the gates of the palace of Axayacatl, leaving behind them much treasure and some of the heaviest artillery. The great square was deserted; the dark streets echoed alarmingly the rumble of artillery and the clank of horses' hoofs. A thick mist filled the air; it was beginning to rain; and was very dark. The army moved on, out the avenue, the deserted scene of yesterday's battle. The Spaniards arrived in safety at the first broken bridge. But the Mexicans had not been entirely unguarded Native sentinels had been stationed at the broken bridges. At sight of the Spaniards, the sentinels

fled, spreading the alarm that the Spaniards were escaping. Instantly the sound of blowing upon shells was heard, and the great serpent-skin drum on the summit of the temple was struck, making a loud wailing noise, a sound of doom for the Spaniards. In a moments' time the city was astir.

Meantime, the vanguard had passed over the bridge. Cortes followed, escorting the artillery and baggage which began slowly to trundle across. But now came the shrill war whistle of the Mexicans, accompanied by showers of arrows. The hurried splash of many paddles could be heard from the dark surface of the lake. A moment more, and the Mexicans were upon them. They gathered at each of the three broken bridges, They clambered up the causeway. They attacked the army in the rear. But the Spaniards pushed forward, too intent on escape to fight any more than to hew their way forward, and thrust their gathering assailants off into the water at the point of the sword. The van-guard had already reached the next break in the causeway. The Mexicans assailed them hotly from the other side. But they were forced to wait for the portable bridge. Impatient orders for it were sent to the rear. The army was still passing over, how-

ever, amid the ferocious attacks of the enemy. Cortes' forces, including the Tlascalans, amounted to some thousands of men, and it took some time for these all to cross.

The vanguard having finally crossed, the Spaniards in charge of the bridge attempted to bring it forward. They tugged and lifted, but of no avail. The bridge had been wedged firmly in its place by the weight of artillery and men. Desperately they worked amid the galling attacks of Mexican warriors. When they at last gave up the bridge many of them had been killed, and all of them wounded. The fatal tidings spread through the army. A panic seized it. Every man thought only of saving his life. The foremost cavaliers plunged into the water, which was not deep, and swam or forded across. Some reached the causeway again in safety, others were driven backward, in attempting the ascent, to be dispatched by Mexican swords. The infantry followed the cavalry. They plunged into the water. Some few swam or waded across, but the canoes of the Mexican warriors thronged the spot. They fell upon the Spaniards without mercy. Some they killed, others, wounded or dying, were dragged off for sacrifice. Well was it for him who had not weighted himself with

Montezuma's fatal gold. The panic-stricken columns in the rear pressed forward, forcing men, horses, baggage, and artillery into the water. The gap was choked up with dead, dying, and those struggling to escape from the fearful mélée.

The whole causeway was a scene of carnage. The air was filled with cries for assistance which were not answered, the groans of the dying calling upon the virgin and St. Iago, and the receding wail of those carried off to be reserved for sacrifice. Finally the baggage, treasure, artillery, and the dead and dying had choked up the gap to the very top. Those in the rear who had escaped from the dire battle crossed over this horrible bridge. They formed themselves into little bodies of men, and repelling the enemy as best they might, pushed onward. Their numbers were greatly diminished as they reached in straggling panic-stricken parties the third and last opening. Here much the same scene was enacted. An unequal struggle in the water, the more fortunate reaching the opposite bank. The loss was not so great as at the previous opening, for they were already relieved of their most cumbersome part.

Cortes, with some of his officers and straggling bands of soldiery, had reached the shore in

safety. The cavalry could have been of no avail on the crowded causeway, and the cavaliers had made their escape as best they might. Cortes, with a few horsemen, returned to the struggling scene of battle, however. He found Alvarado unhorsed, and, with a poor remnant of the rear guard, battling for escape on the brink of the last opening from the enemy, who were pushing him hard from behind, constantly re-inforced as they were from the city. Cortes swam the gap, and assisted his men all he could, by a charge upon the enemy. One of his companion horsemen was struck dead at his side. Cortes and the cavaliers plunged again into the lake followed by the infantry. The story is told that Alvarado looked at the opening before him, and then planting his spear on the mass of ruin, floating there, sprang across the space. To this day the place is called Alvarado's leap; but the story is not credited by the best authorities, and indeed a legal process against Alvarado has been found, in which he was accused of deserting his men in the hour of danger.

A short time after this, Cortes sat upon the steps of a temple, regarding the wounded, dripping, straggling remnants of his army, as they passed before him. The Mexicans did not follow

up their victory. They were busy over the rich spoil on the fatal battle-ground. They had had their revenge for the murder of the flower of their nobility, for the confiscation of their revenues, for the insults done to Montezuma. As nearly as we can judge from the widely differing accounts, at least some four hundred and fifty Spaniards were lost on this "sad night," as it was afterwards called. Most of the Tlascalans had perished, and forty-six of the cavalry were killed. Nearly all the riches, the handsome little train of artillery of which Cortes had been so proud, and all the papers, including the general's diary, which he had kept since leaving Cuba, were gone forever. The survivors had even thrown away their weightier arms, in the struggle for life; nothing but their swords remained. Cortes' friend, Velasquez de Leon, had fallen, and the prophet, Botello, was among the missing. As the general regarded the pitiful sight before him, and missed many a familiar face, he is said to have covered his eyes with his hands, and wept. The Indian women possessed by the Spaniards several children of Montezuma, some Aztec nobles, and the unfortunate Cacama, all held as prisoners, had perished in the retreat. It was with joy that Cortes saw Donna Marina, Aguilar, and

the ship-builder, Martin Lopez, still living. For Cortes was not to be thrown down by misfortunes. Even in this hour of gloom, he hoped to retrieve his fortunes.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE RETREAT.

THE fugitive Spaniards had moved on to the city of Tacuba. Here they stood, huddled together in the public square, uncertain where to go. Cortes soon rode up, and led his men forward, knowing it was dangerous to stay in this unfriendly place. Having come upon an Aztec temple, the Spaniards ascended it, and, driving away the native occupants, took up their abode here. They found wood for the temple use, and they speedily made roaring fires, before which they dried their saturated clothes, and dressed their wounds as best they could. The exhausted soldiers soon threw themselves down, and slept. They were in a deplorable condition, destitute of food and clothing, forced to retreat through a hostile country to Tlascala, where they would arrive with the sad news of the loss of nearly a thousand of her warriors, and where they might meet anything but a friendly reception, in view of these disasters.

Fortunately for the Spaniards, the Mexicans employed this first day after their victory in cleansing their streets of dead and celebrating with rejoicings the sacrifice of their captives. Meantime, the Spaniards, having spent the day in sleeping and resting, resumed their march at midnight. The wounded and disabled formed the centre. Some hobbled upon crutches, some were assisted on by their comrades, and the most disabled were placed on some lame horses. This halting body was surrounded by the cavalry, and those of the infantry who were able to bear arms. The whole was guided by the remnant of Tlascalans. They took a circuitous route to the north, out of the valley, thus avoiding the capital.

Famished, their wounds suffering from lack of care, and the enemy constantly hanging upon their flanks and attacking them from any point of vantage, the little army moved slowly forward Some perished by the way. Stragglers in search of food were seized by the enemy, and Cortes was obliged to be very strict, to prevent any such disorder. The soldiers sucked stalks of corn for nourishment, and subsisted principally on the wild cherry. Once a horse was killed by the enemy, and they feasted upon it, even to the very

hide. Weak and weary, the gold which some of them had succeeded in bringing through all the horrors of the flight from Mexico became a hateful burden, and was dropped here and there on the road. One man, it is said, flung away three thousand *castellanos* by the advice of Cortes.

"The devil take your gold," cried he, "if it is to cost you your life."

The bands of Indians who approached the army from time to time, flinging down stones, arrows, and taunts, from any vantage point upon the Spaniards, had frequently cried, "Only wait till you see what is in store for you." Cuitlahua had not indeed pursued the fugitives, but he did not intend to let them escape him. He had levied a great army from the surrounding country, which was to meet the Spaniards in open field, and give them battle.

Meantime, a week had passed since the "sad night." The Spaniards were nearing the borders of Tlascala, their numbers grown thinner by the losses on the way. Cortes cheered them up with the hope of a friendly reception, although in his heart, he was none too sure of it. What were their feelings, then, as they ascended the mountain pass of Otumba, to hear from their scouts that there was a hostile army ahead. As they

reached the crest of the mountain barrier, they saw for themselves an immense array of Aztec warriors, looking like snow in their white cotton mail, and covering the valley of Otumba. All the chieftains of the neighboring provinces had assembled here with their warriors, fresh and eager to put an end to the enemies of their gods, and their country.

The little weary, famished, band of fugitives, destitute of their most potent arms and artillery might now indeed be daunted. But desperation came to their aid. Return they could not; Tlascala was their only refuge. Their allies, on their part saw the mountains of their home before them. They would cut their way through to Tlascala or die in the attempt.

A halt was ordered. Cortes made a hasty disposition of his forces, presenting a broad front to the enemy, and dividing his cavalry, reduced to twenty in number, into bands of five each. They and the good Spanish swords were his only superiority over the enemy except that of drill. He ordered the horsemen to charge at half speed, with their lances pointed at the face of the enemy, and not stopping to make thrusts. The infantry were to thrust with their swords, passing them clear through the bodies of the enemy that

they might at least sell their lives dearly. But the clouds of Indians were already surrounding them. The Spaniards hastily recommended themselves to heaven, and invoked their patron saint. They then moved down into the valley calling on St. Iago. The answering war-cry of the natives made the mountains ring. The two armies met. The Spaniards were fairly engulfed in the mass of the enemy. And now came a desperate struggle. Aztec and Spaniard closed foot to foot.

The little parties of cavalry galloped at will over the smooth plain which was to their advantage. They bore down the Aztecs with couched lances. But the Aztec ranks surged on around the determined little band. The Spaniards were almost overcome with exhaustion. Their horses were all wounded, and almost every man had felt the effects of native lances, clubs, or swords. And still the Aztecs pushed forward fresh warriors to meet them. But, if the Spaniards wavered for a moment, it was only to redouble their efforts, with sword and lance.

"Strike at the chiefs," cried Cortes; for they were plainly distinguishable, being richly decked with plumes, feather armor, and ornaments and devices of gold. The soldiers now aimed especially at them; for they well knew that all

the authority in such a disorderly host of warriors lay in the leaders.

"Now, gentlemen, is the day of victory," cried the gallant young Sandoval. "Put your trust in God. We shall survive, for he preserves us for some good purpose." And he dashed away through the host, accompanied by Cortes, De Olid, and Alvarado. But, after all, what could their courage avail them? For, if the Spaniards were determined to reach Tlascala, the Aztecs were equally determined that not one of them should leave their land alive. But now Cortes has descried what he believes to be the commander-in-chief of the surging host. There is a particularly distinguished standard, a peculiarly rich plume of feathers. He was surrounded by other chiefs, also richly ornamented.

"Now, gentlemen, there is your mark," he cried, turning to the cavaliers at his side.

They charged directly for the Aztec chieftain, through the dense ranks of the enemy, overturning them, and trampling them down in their impetuous charge. The Spanish cavaliers swept down upon the chief's party. Cortes dealt him a blow, striking down his standard, which he bore himself, according to custom. A cavalier named Salamanca, who rode a "pied mare,"

pursued the chief, killed him, seized his rich feather head-dress, and turning to Cortes presented it to him, saying:

"You struck down the standard, and to you is due the trophy of victory."

The slain chief was indeed an important personage in the army. The news of his death spread. The Aztecs relaxed their efforts. The Spaniards redoubled theirs. The natives fled, their great mass making their confusion the more disastrous. The Spaniards and Tlascalans pursued, forgetting their wounds and their exhaustion. They took ample revenge for their late losses. They finally left the battle field strewn with the dead, conspicuous among whom, was the gay costume of many a native chief. The victors camped for the night in a neighboring temple, a kind of structure which frequently afforded them a temporary succor, built as they invariably were on a pyramidal mound.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MAKING A FRESH START.

THE Spaniards arose on the following morning in more cheerful spirits than they had felt since the night of their disaster. They stayed their stomachs with certain gourds which they found by the way. The Aztec warriors hovered around them, to the very borders of Tlascala. The little army saluted the mountains of this state with joy. Their spirits sank a little, however, when they thought with doubt of the reception they would meet with here. Cortes charged his men, since their number was so small, to be cautious not to give offence to these people. He entered Tlascala, he says, with as much uneasiness as he had felt in meeting the Aztecs in battle.

The Spaniards halted at the first Tlascalan town. Here they rested from their fatigues, and procured provisions, not without paying for them in gold, however. But they were soon relieved of their apprehensions, for the old Tlas-

calan chief, Maxixca and the young warrior Xicotencatl, met them at this place. The chief mourned over Tlascala's losses, especially the death of his daughter, who had been given to Velasquez de Leon, and had perished in the night retreat. He praised the prowess of the Spaniards, however, and commented on the treachery of the Mexicans with a kindly, "I told you so." The Spaniards were again invited to the capital. Here the way-worn adventurers nursed their wounds, and recruited their exhausted bodies. Cortes had several wounds, which threw him into a high fever, from which, however, his good constitution brought him out in safety.

The Spaniards were now attacked by fresh anxieties. It seems that, on his journey to meet Narvaez, Cortes had left a goodly amount of gold at Tlascala, together with some invalids. He made haste to inquire for these, and learned that a party of five horse and forty-five infantry had arrived there from Villa Rica with provisions, on their way to Mexico. They had taken with them the invalids and the chests of gold. The whole party had been robbed and cut off by the Aztecs, on their road to Mexico. Cortes also received various accounts of Spaniards who

had undertaken the journey, supposing every thing to be as peaceable as heretofore, and had met their death on the way. This increase of their losses was very depressing to the Spaniards, especially as they did not know but the natives might have risen and destroyed the colony at Villa Rica, their last stay. Cortes immediately despatched messengers with Indian guides, having directions to avoid the beaten road, to the garrison. They ascertained the safety of the Spaniards at this place, though the news they brought to the little garrison filled it with sorrow.

Meantime, Cuitlahua was doing all in his power to save his kingdom from the invaders. As is frequently the case with governments where the country is ruled by tyranny, the remoter provinces took the occasion of this distraction of the king's forces, to throw off his yoke. Cuitlahua, never-the-less, made every effort to strengthen his frontiers. Determined on the expulsion of the Spaniards, he resolved to try to affect an alliance with the Tlascalans. He sent an embassy to the little state, representing that the white men were their common enemies and the enemies of their common gods, and proposing an alliance to destroy them, in this, the hour of their weakness. The Tlascalan chiefs held a

council. The young Xicotencatl, who had never overcome his enmity for the Spaniards, was hotly in favor of accepting the proposition of the Mexicans. But the old Maxixca stoutly withstood the tide in favor of treachery to the white men. The chieftains had a fierce quarrel, and the older one is said to have kicked the younger one down the steps of the council hall. Cuitlahua's proposition was rejected. The Spaniards got some wind of the affair, which added to their anxieties; for Xicotencatl still headed a party in Tlascala, opposed to the white men.

After three weeks of rest in Tlascala, Cortes began to meditate a fresh campaign against the Mexican empire. He no sooner laid his plans before his troops, than murmurs of opposition arose. The remnant of Narvaez' soldiers, longing for their plantations and mines in Cuba, had thought that their disasters had put an end to any farther ambitious schemes on the part of their commander. The discontents found a leader in Cortes' friend Duero, who loudly cursed the day he had embarked on such a business and the gold that had been lost in the Mexican ditches. Finding that Cortes took no notice of their noisy complaints, they drew up a petition headed by the name of Duero. They begged the general to

proceed immediately to Vera Cruz where, at least, his forces would be united and with ships at their disposal, before the natives discovered their weakness, and attacked them separately. Cortes read the paper. But he was "determined" as he says, "by no means to go down to the seaboard ports, preferring to encounter every toil and danger that could possibly lie in our way." He was convinced that to display the least faint-heartedness, especially before the Tlascalans, would be ruinous. He told his men so, declared that "fortune favors the brave," and that, as they were Christians in the service of their king, heaven would not suffer them to utterly lose, "so noble a land." The malcontents accepted their general's answer with very ill grace; but were obliged to content themselves, for the present, with grumbling at those of Cortes' veteran men who were staunch in their allegiance to him. "You have nothing to lose but your lives," said the Cuban landowners.

Cortes resolved to strike his first blow at the Mexican province of Tepeaca, bordering on those of Tlascala and Cholula. It was here that some of the Spaniards had been waylaid and murdered. On Cortes' first passage through their country these natives had readily offered their allegiance

but when the tide had turned against him they had taken the Mexican side, and Cuitlahua had placed garrisons within their territory. To secure Tepeaca was especially important, aside from motives of revenge; for this province lay on the direct route from Villa Rica to Mexico, which it was necessary for Cortes to command in order to carry out his further plans.

The Spaniards, accordingly, marched from Tlascala, resolved to retrieve their old reputation for success. They were accompanied, as usual, by numbers of their allies who were very eager to fight the Aztecs at any point. The Tepeacans met them at their borders with a large force, and gave battle. The battle ground was open corn fields. The Spaniards had now neither artillery nor firearms, but they had still a small band of the dreaded horsemen. They charged in every direction over the level fields, which favored their movements. The natives found themselves helpless against such warfare, and were speedily routed.

The city of Tepeaca was thus by a bold move reduced to submission. There Cortes took up his quarters. He made the rebellion "of the people," as he styled it, an excuse to make slaves of numbers of captives. Warriors they did not want,

but women and boys were cruelly branded with a hot iron, according to the custom of the time, and divided among the conquerors. One fifth was reserved for the emperor of Spain, another fifth for Cortes, and the remainder were distributed much in the same way as Montezuma's gold. Again it was complained that Cortes used corrupt measures to secure the better part of this spoil to himself and his favorites, while the disabled and ugly were left for the soldiers. Cortes established a post at Tepeaca which he named Segura de la Frontera, "security of the Frontier."

Cuitlahua had taken pains to establish a large army at a neighboring mountain pass. They were encamped near the strongly-fortified city of Huacachula, where a Mexican garrison had also been placed. The people of this city, willing to conciliate the conquerors and aggravated by the arrogance of the Mexican warriors quartered upon them, sent Cortes a message, excusing their attitude of apparent hostility, and offering to assist in ousting the garrison within their city, if Cortes would send a force for that purpose. He, of course, gladly accepted the proposition, and detached Christoval de Olid, with two hundred men and a large force of Tlascalans, to reduce

the city. They were joined on their march, by a great number of Indians, both from this province and from that of Cholula, who displayed such alacrity to join the attack on the Mexicans, that the Spaniards became suspicious of treachery. Olid suddenly turned about, and marched for Cholula. From here, he sent some of the suspected Indian leaders, captive to Cortes. The general, after making a careful examination, came to the conclusion, that there was nothing in the rumor, and that, at any rate, it would not do to exhibit any fear of the natives, in abandoning the enterprise. Cortes accordingly marched to Cholula, where he joined Olid. He now made an arrangement for the co-operation of the inhabitants of Huacachula.

Cortes and his men were on the march before daybreak, the following morning. Meantime, the Mexican garrison had sent out scouts, according to custom, and, receiving no warning, was entirely unsuspicious of any danger. The inhabitants, in fact, had captured the scouts to prevent any alarm. About ten o'clock, the Huacachulans, receiving intelligence that the Spanish army was approaching, pounced upon the Mexicans within their city. They had already made some forty prisoners when Cortes' men hurried to the

scene. The noise of combat filled the streets of the city. An Indian guided the army to the principal quarters of the Mexicans, which were being stormed. The natives had already taken the terrace and upper story of the building; but the Mexicans within fought so bravely, that the assailants had been unable to force an entrance to the main building. Cortes soon accomplished this: the furious natives rushed in upon the Mexicans, who resisted to the last man. Cortes had wished to save some of them alive, that he might get from them some information with regard to the movements of Cuitlahua. But he could rescue only one, and he was "more dead than alive."

The main army of the Mexicans was stationed immediately beyond the city, on a hill. Some fugitive Mexicans who had escaped the slaughter within Huacachula fled toward the encampment. But the army had already been roused by the noise of conflict, and was advancing to the scene of battle when they were met by the fugitives. The army was composed, mostly, of the wealthier Mexicans. They were richly decked with gems, gold, and brilliant feathers, and presented the finest appearance of any Aztec warriors the Spaniards had yet seen. Before

the latter had discovered their presence, they had already fired a quarter of the town. On being informed of this, Cortes advanced, and charged them with only his cavalry, his infantry being much fatigued. When the Spanish horsemen dashed upon them at full speed the Mexicans retreated, drawing the cavalry after them into a narrow pass. Still the Spaniards hotly pursued up the face of a rugged acclivity. When they had reached the summit the heat of the sun under this southern sky, had so prostrated horse and man, that neither Mexicans nor Spaniards could advance or retreat. Some of the men and several of the horses fell dead. The Indian allies of the Spaniards, however, eager for battle, had followed up the pursuit. Arriving upon the scene, fresh and ferocious, they drew the Spaniards with them in a head-long charge, which put the Mexicans to flight doing them much injury. The victors pursued, and soon reached the deserted camp of the Mexican army. Here they found rich booty in slaves and stores, to which the assembled natives, who had hastened in numbers to join the pursuit, helped themselves plentifully.

After a few days rest Cortes marched to a city some twelve miles distant, called Iztucan,

where a Mexican garrison had been stationed and which was devoted to the interests of Mexico, its cacique being a relative of Montezuma. Such multitudes of natives followed the victorious Spaniards on their march, that Cortes asserts that they covered the hills and valleys almost as far as one could see. The city of Iztucan was almost entirely surrounded by a bend in the river which ran near it. Warned of the army's approach, the inhabitants had sent away their women, children, and old people, while the warriors remained to defend it. They bravely attempted its defence, but they soon saw that the Spaniards had been informed of the weakest side of their city. Having gained an entrance, the invaders pursued the defenders, over the walls of the city, and across the river. The natives destroyed the bridges behind them, however, thus checking for a moment the pursuit. The Spaniards and their allies, soon followed, swimming and effecting a crossing as best they might. They pursued the fugitives some miles, and then returned to the rich plunder of the conquered town

Cortes' victories made him a hero among the natives, who were eager to follow a standard which led to rich spoil. A wide and populous

tract of country owned submission to him. He became umpire in all the difficulties of the people. He was now no longer a fugitive, fleeing from the enemy and dependant on his Tlascalan allies for support and protection.

About this time Maxixca, the chief who had befriended the Spaniards in the Tlascalan councils, died. The small-pox had been brought over by a negro on board of Narvaez' fleet. It had been communicated to the Cempoallan Indians, and had spread over the country. This European plague was a most terrible scourge among the natives, who knew nothing of its treatment. It had reached Tlascala, and carried away the friendly old chief, much to the sorrow of the Spaniards. Cortes and his officers put on mourning on the occasion. It soon spread to Mexico, where the king, Cuitlahua, fell a victim to this subtile ally of the white man. The disease travelled on toward the Pacific coast, killing off the natives in immense numbers. The small-pox was so prevalent in the provinces now owning allegiance to the king of Spain, that Cortes was frequently called upon to appoint a new cacique for some town whose chief had died of this disease.

Cortes now allowed a number of Narvaez

old officers, who were very importunate, to return to Cuba, furnishing them with provisions and a good vessel, and sent Alvarado to escort them to the coast. He said that he would rather be without such unwilling service. Many of the soldiers had become reconciled to another fortune-hunting campaign, since the victories of the past few weeks.

All Cortes' plans looked toward the re-taking of Mexico. He resolved never to be caught again on the fatal causeways unprotected. He felt the necessity of vessels, in besieging the capital. He formed the plan of building thirteen small brigantines in Tlascala and transporting them over the mountains to the valley of Mexico. He had no sooner conceived this plan than he sent Martin Lopez to Tlascala to begin the work.

The governor of Cuba had heard nothing from the main-land since he had sent his last expensive expedition. Certain, however, that Narvaez was in command of the colony, he sent a small vessel to Villa Rica, loaded with stores, under command of Barba, the former commander at Havana. The captain bore letters to Narvaez, in which the governor gave orders that, if Cortes was not already dead, he should be forwarded to Cuba, that he might be sent on

from there to Spain. When Barba's vessel entered the harbor of Villa Rica the commander of this post went out in a boat to meet him. His crew carried concealed arms with them. He boarded Barba's vessel, and having saluted the captain inquired courteously after the health of the governor of Cuba.

"Very well," responded Barba. "How is Narvaez, and what has become of Cortes?"

"Oh, Cortes is a fugitive," said the commandant, "and Narvaez is well established and in possession of great riches."

Whereupon, Barba decided to go on shore. But he had no sooner descended with the commandant into his boat than he found himself a prisoner of Cortes. Barba, however, had of old befriended Cortes in his disobedience. He and his crew of thirteen soldiers and two horses were ready enough to join him in his adventures. Cortes welcomed them handsomely, and Barba informed him that he might expect another small vessel in a short time. This ship soon put in at Villa Rica. Her captain and crew of eight soldiers and one horse were added, by the same ruse, to Cortes' little army. Great was the joy of the Spaniards at these small though unexpected recruits.

But Cortes' good fortune did not stop here. The governor of Jamaica had pursued his purpose of establishing a colony within the limits of Cortes' discoveries. He had sent vessels to the river Panuco, some few degrees north of Villa Rica, for this purpose. But the Indians had resisted the Spaniards, who had lost many of their number and were obliged to flee to Villa Rica for relief. Vessels destined for this colony reached Villa Rica from time to time. Thus Garay was adding to Cortes' forces, while he supposed he was establishing a rival colony. One vessel contained some seventy sickly soldiers, many of whom died. Another one contained some fifty men and seven horses. These recruits were so plump in appearance that Cortes' men dubbed them "the sirloins." Still another vessel arrived, under the command of a man known as "Old Ramirez," with some forty men and ten horses. These soldiers wore exceedingly thick and clumsy cotton armor, and were nicknamed "the pack-horses." Cortes also despatched vessels to St. Domingo, for re-inforcements.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN THE VALLEY OF MEXICO AGAIN.

CUITLAHUA had reigned but three or four months, but his reign had been a glorious one for the Mexicans, in that he had led them in the expulsion of the hated strangers from their land.

A new king was elected in the usual manner. Guatemozin, a nephew of the last king and of Montezuma, was appointed to the throne. He was a fine-looking young man, about twenty-five years of age. He took hold of the reins of government with courage. His rule was despotic, and he soon made himself so terrible to his own subjects that they trembled in his presence. On ascending the throne, he was married to his cousin, a beautiful daughter of Montezuma. Guatemozin was informed, through spies, of the movements of the enemy. He immediately made active preparations for resistance and defense.

Having finished his conquests in the neighborhood of Tepeaca, Cortes left a small garrison at

this post, and returned to Tlascala. Lopez, the shipwright, and "Old Ramirez," who was a carpenter, were busily at work at the new ships. Cortes now sent to Villa Rica for sails, rigging, and iron, together with several smiths who were there. Pitch, the use of which was unknown to the natives, was procured from the neighboring mountains. Cortes also had his arms repaired, and made such addition to his stock as he could. Having procured saltpetre, he desired to get sulphur, for the purpose of manufacturing powder. The daring cavalier, Montano, undertook to ascend the volcano of Popocatepetl, to procure this article. Montano and his party pushed up to the very edge of the crater. The leader was let down in a basket into this smoking pit, and scraped sulphur from the sides of the crater. This operation was repeated a number of times, until sufficient sulphur had been procured in this hazardous way. Montano was afterwards rewarded with a patent of nobility for his daring deed.

Preparations were well advanced by Christmas. Cortes reviewed his troops, and found that he had some five hundred and fifty men, forty of whom were cavalry, and eighty cross-bow-men and musketeers. The artillery consisted of some eight or nine field-pieces.

The Spaniards began their march for Mexico on the very last days of 1520, leaving the ship-builders and most of the Tlascalan forces to follow when the vessels should be finished. Cortes had chosen the most rugged route across the mountains, knowing that the Mexicans would lie in wait for him, and thinking them less likely to protect this pass. The road was indeed so steep and rough that it was almost impassable for an army. A toilsome climb finally brought the Spaniards to the summit of the ridge. They suffered severely from cold at this elevation, and they looked anxiously for an attack in the narrow defile. As they began to descend, they found the huge trees felled across the road, to obstruct the passage. The cavalry climbed over their trunks with difficulty. Cortes and his horsemen, having passed these obstructions, waited for the army to come up. They looked down upon the beautiful valley of Mexico, which lay at their feet, with satisfaction that they had overcome so many difficulties. This was tempered, however, with sorrow, as they distinguished the disastrous battle-ground of the sad night.

"We will never leave the country again without victory, though it cost us our lives," they said.

The rear had come up now, and the Spaniards again resumed their march. Now they could see the smoke of beacon fires, rising from the hills and showing that the natives had discovered their approach. At every turn in the road the Spaniards looked for a Mexican force. But none appeared. The passage was once, indeed, blocked by a body of native warriors, but a charge or two from the cavalry speedily dispersed them. The Mexicans were learning that dread of meeting Europeans in the open field so characteristic of our northern savages. Then, too, the nation was at this time ravaged by the small-pox.

Having descended into the valley, the Spaniards took the route to the city of Tezcuco, which was across the lake from Mexico, and which Cortes had chosen for his headquarters. They encamped for the night in a small Indian village. In the midst of an enemy's country, the Spaniards felt themselves in great peril. Cortes himself joined the watch for the first quarter of the night.

The march was resumed in the morning. Tezcuco was the second city in importance in the valley, and the Spaniards were not without fears as to their reception here. The unfortunate king of this province, Cacama, had died in the

battle of the sad night. A brother had succeeded to the throne, putting to death the younger brother whom Cortes had placed there.

The Tezcucans dared not resist the Spaniards. They therefore sent a deputation of nobles bearing a standard of gold, to meet the army with a peaceable message. The sight of this embassy was a great relief to the Spaniards. Cortes, however, received the ambassadors, whom he knew well, very sternly, for it was in their province that his forty-five men with their treasure had been taken. Cortes answered their proposal of peace by accusing them of the deed and demanding the restoration of the gold. The ambassadors answered that the Mexicans had taken the gold from them, and desired the Spaniards to take up their quarters in some towns near their city. Cortes replied that he would not stop until he had marched into Tezcuco. The messengers then went away, ostensibly to prepare lodgings for the Spaniards. The army was met in the suburbs, by natives who furnished it with a good dinner.

It was, therefore, noon when the Spaniards entered Tezcuco. They noticed that the streets seemed almost deserted. Cortes marched for the royal palace, where he took up his quarters. The building was very large, and easily accommodated

the whole army. Cortes assembled his men immediately, and caused proclamation to be made that no one should leave his quarters without permission, under pain of death. He was anxious that the inhabitants might receive no insult from the soldiery, and might be made to feel secure.

In the course of the afternoon, several Spaniards ascended a temple, and took a survey of the city. Behold, the people were all leaving it! The inhabitants were carrying their children and effects into the woods and to the reedy banks of the lake, where canoes awaited them. On hearing this, Cortes sent to secure the king as a pledge for the return of his people. But he had fled betimes across the lake to Mexico, taking with him his movable treasure. He had sent the embassy and provided the army with a dinner, merely that he might give the inhabitants the more time to evacuate the city.

It was already night and too late for Cortes to put any stop to the flight. He turned the event to account, as best he could, by raising another brother of this numerous family to the throne, through whom he ruled, and induced a small portion of the inhabitants to again return to the city. The youth soon died, however, and Cortes used for his interests still another brother,

with the unpronounceable name of Ixtlilxochitl. This prince was a remarkable young warrior. His father is reputed to have been a great king, though his history, as written by a Mexican descendant, savors too much of Spanish ideas and Spanish romance to be taken for fact. On the birth of this particular prince, the astrology of the land indicated, according to tradition, a disastrous future for the child. It is said to have been predicted that the boy would unite with his country's enemies to overthrow it. The king was advised to put him to death, but he answered, that if his child were destined to co-operate with the sons of the gods, who were to come from the east, he would not interfere. We suspect that this prophesy was invented after it had been fulfilled. The boy is said to have early shown a spirit of insubordination, and when certain councillors repeated the advice which had been given at his birth he led a party of juvenile warriors to their buildings, and put them to death. His father, however, had forgiven him when he defended himself as acting the part of a warrior. On the death of his father, this irrepressible youth had contested the throne with his brother, Cacama. Montezuma had taken the part of the latter, but the matter was not settled

until some of the mountain territory had been ceded to Ixtlilxochitl. The young chief had made himself famous as a warrior when very young. Willing to oppose Montezuma, when Cortes had first entered the valley he had formed an alliance with the Spaniards. Cortes now made him lord of Tezcuco, and he was destined to be of great service to the Spaniards.

The secret of Cortes' success, with an army so small, lay in the fact that he took under his wing all the malcontents and rebels of the country, and forced minor provinces into submission before he struck a blow at the central power thus enfeebled. By this means, he was furnished with provisions and recruits. Under the influence of terror, some of the neighboring towns now sent in their submission to the Spaniards. When Guatemozin heard of this he sent messengers to them, asking the meaning of such conduct, whether it were from fear, in which case they ought to feel more fear of the Mexican armies, or whether it were from the wish to retain their lands, in which case he offered them larger possessions in his dominions. But his messengers were seized, and sent to Cortes. The general was willing to bring about the subjection of Mexico peaceably, if possible. He treated the Mexican

messengers handsomely, and sent them back with a message, desiring the old relations of friendship, and promising pardon for past offences. But Guatemozin had no intention but to defend his city to the last.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE IZTAPALAPANS OUTWIT CORTES.

CORTES resolved to strike his first blow at the city of Iztapalapan, which had been the private domain of Cuitlahua, and whose inhabitants entertained an especial enmity for the Spaniards. The city was situated on a narrow tongue of land between the fresh water lake of Xochicalco and the salt lake of Tezcuco. Part of its houses were built on the land, and part on piles in the water. The fresh water lake was lower than that of Tezcuco, the waters of which were kept from overflowing the lower region by means of a dike. Iztapalapan was especially remarkable for its fine gardens, in which Cuitlahua had taken great pride.

Leaving Sandoval in command of a strong garrison at Tezcuco, Cortes marched toward Iztapalapan, with two hundred Spaniards and some thousands of Indian allies. Before they reached the city a native force assailed them both by land and from the water, which was speedily

covered with Indian canoes. The Spaniards fought them, and drove them back. The natives rallied, and again the Spaniards drove them before them. The battle was kept up into the very streets of the city. Meantime, Cortes had noticed some Indians at work upon the dike of Lake Tezcuco. He thought no more of it, however. Flushed with victory, the Spaniards and their allies rushed hotly into the city. The latter, like other barbarous forces, were perfectly uncontrollable in the hour of victory. They slaughtered and plundered without stint. The inhabitants had fled to the houses on the water. The enemy waded out after them. From here most of them escaped in canoes across the lake. Those who did not escape were put to the sword. And now the men devoted themselves to the spoil. They sacked the houses, and left many of them in flames. Night came on, and they were still busy at their work, so busy that they did not at first notice a rising of the surrounding water. The stealthy but rapid overflow soon became so important as to attract attention. Then for the first time the meaning of the busy workmen on the dike flashed upon the mind of Cortes. The brave Iztapalapans had thought to drown the hostile army in flooding

their homes. The retreat was hastily sounded, and the army, laden with plunder, pushed for the shore, chased by the rising waters. They struggled and waded forward, dropping their spoil by the way. Some of the Indians lost their footing, and were drowned in the lake. The main army finally reached dry land, having lost their rich plunder and spoiled their powder. They were, moreover, supperless, wet, and cold, while, most provoking of all, the Indians mocked them from their canoes. They had made their escape none too soon, however. Three hours later, they would have been cut off from flight.

When day dawned, the Spaniards saw that the two lakes were on a level. A great number of Mexicans had sallied forth in their canoes, expecting to see the Spaniards caught by the water. They gave battle, killed several men and horses, while the Spaniards could do them little harm as they escaped easily in their canoes. The Indians followed the Spanish army with harassing attacks around the borders of the lake to Tezcuco, which the latter reached in no very pleasant humor.

Every now and then some Indian province sent a friendly message to Cortes. The people of Otumba, where the Spaniards had fought the last

desperate battle of their retreat, now sent in their submission with a request for protection from Guatemozin's revenge. Cortes' forces were so small that he was unable to comply with such requests; but he endeavored to stir the native provinces up to the defence of themselves and of each other. The city of Chalco, situated on the fresh-water lake, was, however, of especial importance, as it lay on the road between Villa Rica and Mexico. These people offered to join the alliance but begged for assistance against the Mexicans. Cortes, accordingly, sent a detachment of Spaniards and the Tlascalans under Sandoval, to their aid. The young cavalier, after a brisk skirmish with the enemy, succeeded in relieving the people of Chalco from them for a time.

And now the brigantines had been completed and it remained to transport them in pieces to Tezcuco. This was a dangerous undertaking, since Guatemozin would destroy them if he could. The Tlascalans assembled their warriors in great numbers for the duty. They sent word to Cortes that they were about to start. The general immediately sent a detachment under Sandoval to escort them over the mountains. On his way to meet the Tlascalans, Sandoval had undertaken to chastise an Indian town whose inhabitants had

captured the forty-five Spaniards at the time of the siege of Cortes. There could be no doubt of the fate of these unfortunate men, for their arms and accoutrements were found hanging in the Indian temples together with the horses' skins dried and their shoes hung up as trophies. In one house Sandoval's men found this sentence, traced on a white wall with a piece of charcoal:—"Here the unfortunate Juan Juste was a prisoner." These words filled the hearts of the Spaniards with grief. They went eagerly to the attack on the town. The inhabitants fled at their approach. The Spaniards rode into the town, killing the warriors and capturing the women and children for slaves.

Sandoval was moved by compassion for the unhappy people. He ceased the pursuit, endeavored to gather together the remaining inhabitants, and left them in possession of the town.

Sandoval marched on across the frontier to a Tlascalan town where he found the brigantines and their escort awaiting him. The following day, the great force began their march for Tezcuco. According to Cortes' account, thousands of men were engaged in transporting the beams and timbers of the vessels. Eight Spanish cavalry and a hundred Spanish foot led the van.

The porters were guarded on either side by native warriors, while another Spanish guard and a large army under the Tlascalan chief, Chichimecatl, brought up the rear. This chief had at first commanded the van, but had been ordered to the rear, as the planks were under his especial guard, and it was feared that in the van, which was the post of the most danger, they would be an embarrassment in case of attack. But Chichimecatl, who courted danger, was greatly offended at this arrangement. When his wounded pride was finally pacified by his being assured that the rear was in reality the most dangerous post, he was unwilling that any Spaniards should remain with him in the rear guard as he wanted the honor all to himself.

After three days march, the army reached Tezcuco in safety, marching to the noise of Indian drums. There was great rejoicing among the Spaniards at the arrival of their brigantines. It took more than six hours for the line of warriors to march into the city. Nothing remained now but to have them put together. Cortes had always to keep a strong guard over his little dockyard, for the Mexicans were bent on destroying the vessels, and more than once made attacks, and attempted to set them afire.

He expressed the warmest thanks to the Tlascalan chieftains, and provided them with fine quarters and handsome entertainment.

"We only await your commands," said the eager chiefs. "We and our people have come determined to be revenged or die."

"I beg you will first rest yourselves," answered Cortes, "and I assure you I will soon give you your hands full."

CHAPTER XXXI.

CORTES RECONNOITRES.

THE brigantines were to be finished before the final blow could be struck at Mexico. Cortes resolved to use this to the best purpose in lopping off branches of Guatemozin's kingdom. Three or four days after the arrival of the Tlascalans, Cortes ordered them to be in readiness, together with some three hundred of his own troops. The army marched forth in the early morning, ignorant of its destination; for Cortes feared that the Mexicans would get some inkling of his plans through the Tezcucan Indians, who were none too faithful to the Spaniards. The army marched all day. Just as night was coming on, they met a Mexican force. A brisk charge of cavalry drove the latter into the woods.

The nimble-footed Tlascalans kept up the pursuit until many were slain. The army then encamped for the night, Cortes enforcing a strict watch. He resumed his march on the following day. His route lay along the shore of the

salt lake and around some smaller lakes north of it.

The army approached a village, built on piles in the water, where they understood that the enemy was in force. Cortes resolved to make an attack. But he discovered that the only causeway which led to the town had been broken. The Aztecs rushed out to meet the Spaniards in their canoes which were shielded by strong wooden screens, rendering the fire of Spanish musketry quite unavailing. The Spaniards and their allies began to fear the entire failure of the attack. At this juncture, some friendly Indians informed Cortes of a ford. The army then began wading for the village, Cortes and a detachment keeping guard from the land side. The men rushed into the town, slaughtering the inhabitants and driving them to their boats. After a time they returned to shore bringing with them a booty of the valuables of the country, mantles, salt, gold, and slaves. Cortes marched a league farther, and encamped for the night.

He had scarcely resumed his march in the morning when the Aztecs again attacked him. The Spaniards drove the enemy, and came upon a large and beautiful city which was entirely deserted. Here they encamped for the night. The

next town they came to was also deserted, and they marched right through this and on to the city of Acapuzalco, which was famous for its gold smiths. The inhabitants had fled, however, taking their valuables with them.

The Spaniards in their course around the lakes had now reached the neighborhood of the capital, which Cortes wished to reconnoitre. He pushed on, therefore, toward Tacuba, the scene of the night retreat from Mexico. The Mexicans had stationed a force to guard this city. The Spaniards were forced to cut their way through the enemy. Arrived at the city, the whole army took up its quarters for the night in the palace at Tacuba. The allies began pillaging and destroying the city by fire on the following day. Cortes spent six days in the city of Tacuba, occupied constantly in skirmishes with the Mexicans. These warriors and the Tlascalans were hourly exchanging threats and bravadoes and sometimes meeting each other in single combat.

Guatemozin succeeded in drawing Cortes into a trap. In one of their engagements, the Mexicans made a feint of retreating across the causeway, drawing the Spaniards after them. Suddenly Cortes found himself surrounded by vast numbers of Indians upon the causeway and in the

water. Five Spaniards fell dead, and numbers were wounded. A Spanish ensign was thrown into the water, and the Mexicans were dragging him to their canoes, that they might reserve him for sacrifice. By a superhuman effort he wrenched himself from their grasp, and escaped still holding his colors. The Mexican warriors tauntingly invited the Spaniards to re-enter Mexico.

"Go in! go in, and enjoy yourselves!" they cried. And again, "Do you think there is a second Montezuma to do your bidding?"

Cortes still hoped to effect a compromise. He beckoned for silence. Spaniards and Mexicans ceased, for a moment, their taunts and fighting. "Why are you so foolish," said he, "as to seek your own ruin? If there is any one of your principal chiefs among you, I would like him to make his appearance, for I wish to speak him."

"Oh, we are all chiefs," cried the derisive warriors. "Say what you please."

Cortes was silent. The Mexicans then began to load him with reproaches.

"Let them die of hunger," cried a Spanish soldier. "Let us not suffer them to leave the city."

"We are in no want," retorted the Mexicans,

"and when we get out of food we will eat you and the Tlascalans." One of them reached out some corn cakes in derision. "Take these," he cried, "for we have an abundance besides." Then they began to utter their war cries, which Cortes says are "certainly terrible to hear." They attacked the Spaniards with redoubled ferocity, and Cortes saw that his imprudence had gotten him into a dangerous position. He ordered a retreat from the causeway. Inch by inch, the Spaniards fell back, fronting the enemy and giving battle all the time.

Having accomplished his main purpose, a parley with the Mexicans, Cortes began the return march for Tezcuco. When the Mexicans discovered this, they thought he was retreating from fear, and they fell upon his flanks in great numbers. Cortes adopted their own tactics, to rid himself of this annoyance. He placed some twenty horsemen, under his own lead, in ambush, at the rear of the army. Shortly after, the Mexican warriors came rushing by in pursuit of the Spanish army. Waiting until the enemy had passed, Cortes gave the signal, and the cavalry rushed upon their rear "in very handsome style," as Cortes says. The allies faced about, and joined the attack. The Mexicans were so se-

verely punished that they gave up the idea that this was a panic-stricken army which could be braved without danger.

Cortes encamped on the last night in a pretty little village, a few miles from Tezcuco. Arrived on the following day at headquarters, he found the garrison, which had heard nothing from him, delighted at his return. The Tlascalans were now anxious to return home with their plunder, which was very considerable. Cortes did not refuse them this, and probably it would have been useless to do so. These wild warriors had many characteristics in common with the savages of our own country.

Guatemozin had many strong garrisons around the edge of the valley and in the surrounding mountains. The people of Chalco were especially menaced by these posts, and they again sent an appeal to Cortes. The general immediately dispatched Sandoval with some twenty horse, and three hundred foot to their assistance. This cavalier hastened to Chalco, where he was joined by a large force of Indian allies. From here the army set forth for Huaxtepec, the principal Mexican garrison in the neighborhood. Sandoval was met on the way by a Mexican army advancing in three columns, to the wild sound of their

musical instruments. Cavalry was the Spaniards' main weapon in war with the natives, and a cavalry charge usually opened the battle, and was frequently sufficient to disperse the enemy. Sandoval now put himself at the head of his cavalry.

"St. Iago for us! Comrades, fall on!" cried the young commander.

A brisk charge broke the main Mexican column, but the warriors rallied and again presented an unbroken front. The ground was rough and very unfavorable to cavalry, so Sandoval ordered up his musketeers and cross-bow-men to engage the enemy in front. The troops armed with sword and buckler were to turn the flanks of the Mexicans, while the cavalry were to act under their leader as opportunity presented. The Indian allies were also brought forward to the attack. The united forces finally forced the enemy to retreat, but only to a second and stronger position, very unfavorable for the cavalry. The Spanish army finally dislodged the brave Mexican warriors, and pursued them to the town. The Spaniards now chose an encampment for the night. The soldiers were busy in the usual camp duties, and the horsemen were seeking forage for their horses, when the cry arose:

"To arms! to arms! the enemy is coming."

The whiz of stones and arrows and the fearful war cry rang through the air. Every man, Indian and Spaniard, sprang for his arms, and together they rushed upon the enemy. After a severe skirmish, the Mexicans were driven back. But Sandoval's blood was up, and, with an impetuous pursuit, he drove them completely from the town. He took up his quarters for the night in a garden where the air was laden with sweet scents. The morning discovered this to be a beautiful spot, the finest garden the Spaniards had seen in the new world, ornamented with handsome buildings, a cool stream running through it, decked with beds of flowers, and with trees of many kinds. Here the weary and wounded Spaniards rested for two days.

Sandoval next marched upon the town of Acapichtla, defended by another strong Mexican garrison. This town was built upon a rocky height, inaccessible to cavalry. The army no sooner approached than the inhabitants hurled down missiles upon their heads. The allies drew back at the idea of making the steep ascent to this fortress in the face of the enemy. But some of the cavalry dismounted, others were left as a guard in the plain, while the Spaniards led the way up the steep. With determined efforts, they

scaled the heights, closely followed by their Indian allies. Sandoval and a number of his men were wounded in the ascent. But they fought their way into the town. The allies now made up for their previous tardiness, by saving the Spaniards the trouble of putting the garrison to death. The Spaniards, on their part, were only too willing to devote themselves to the search after gold and the capture of women and children for slaves. The army returned in triumph to Tezcuco, well loaded with spoil.

When Guatemozin heard of these losses, he was greatly enraged against the people of Chalco, and resolved to punish them for their rebellion. The Spaniards had no sooner turned their backs than some two thousand canoes came swiftly down the lakes to Chalco, bearing an avenging army. Sandoval had not had time to make a report to Cortes when fresh complaints came from the inhabitants of Chalco that the Mexicans were upon them. Cortes, thinking that Sandoval had not executed his commission well, flew into a violent passion, and ordered Sandoval back to Chalco without hearing him out. The brave young officer obeyed, indignant at his commander's injustice.

Forced to it, the people of Chalco had

summoned their allies, marched forth, met the Mexicans, and repulsed them. The battle was over when Sandoval arrived, so he marched back again to Tezcuco. Cortes had forgotten his momentary anger, and was delighted with the event; but Sandoval turned away, and refused to speak to him. Cortes, however, was too wise a general to omit making ample amends to the most valuable of his officers.

The road was now open between the garrison at Villa Rica and the headquarters at Tezcuco. Great was Cortes' delight to hear, about this time, of the arrival of three vessels containing fresh recruits, These probably came from St. Domingo, where Cortes had sent for recruits.

CHAPTER XXXII.

FORTS UPON ROCKS. SOME NARROW ESCAPES.

THE Mexicans could not endure the defection of Chalco, especially as the province was a corn country, and both sides felt it important for supplies. Only a few days had passed when an embassy arrived from this place. The messengers spread before Cortes a large white cloth, on which was traced a map of the country about their city, representing the various towns from which the enemy designed to attack them.

Early in April, 1521, Cortes marched at the head of some three hundred and thirty Spaniards and a large force of Tezcucan Indians. He designed to make a circuit around the southern end of the valley, chastising his enemies, and relieving the inhabitants of Chalco from their apprehensions. He marched through this city, gathering native recruits. Indeed the largest numbers of Indians which had ever marched after Cortes now flocked to his standard, attracted by his friendly treatment of them, but

more than all by his reputation for success and the prospect of plunder.

Cortes marched to the southward, and entered the mountain passes, held by the Mexicans, who were wont to sweep down upon the rebellious provinces in the valley at any moment. The route lay between two high, rocky cliffs upon the summits of which was here and there a fortress. The garrisons of these posts greeted the hostile army with loud taunts and reproaches. But Cortes would not be enticed away from his main purpose. The army passed on, through a deserted town. The inhabitants had fled to their rocky defenses, where they felt themselves safe in inviting the revenge of the enemy. The army now entered a plain from which rose a steep acclivity, on the summit of which stood a fort. Here the women and children of the country had taken refuge, and here they were guarded by their hardy warriors. At the approach of the army, they sounded the alarm, and signalled to other heights by means of smoke. As the Spaniards approached the place, showers of stones darts, and arrows, fell upon their heads, doing them much injury. Cortes did not like to pass by, laying himself open to a suspicion of cowardice both from his enemies and his allies. He resolved

to give the garrison "something they would not relish," as he expresses it. He caused the rock which was about a league in circumference to be reconnoitred. The ascent seemed almost perpendicular at any point. The thought of taking it, said Cortes, "seemed like madness." He could, indeed, have besieged it, and forced the garrison to surrender by starvation; but he had not the time to spend. He made the mad resolve to storm it. He ordered his men to ascend, under the lead of an ensign, named Christoval Corral, while the cavalry remained to keep guard on the plain. The brave soldiers began to scramble up from ledge to ledge. The Indians above rolled down large masses of rock. Sometimes they fell among the clambering soldiers, sometimes they bounded from ledge to ledge, skipping the Spaniards. An immense rock fell upon the head of one soldier who was provided with a helmet, and killed him instantly. A moment after two more soldiers were crushed. Still the Spaniards clambered up, wounded, if not killed by the rolling stones. Another soldier fell and then two more. Corral still kept the lead. He had received a wound on the head, his face was covered with blood, and the colors which he bore were in tatters. Close behind

him, followed Bernal Diaz with all the ardor of youth. They sheltered themselves in the concavities of the rock, and worked their way upwards from hollow to hollow. Presently Corral called out:

"Oh, Signor Bernal Diaz, here is no advancing. Remain under cover, for it is as much as I can do to keep my hold and preserve myself from falling."

Diaz looked back. There were Barba and two soldiers following up under shelter of the projections in the face of the rock. "It is of no use to advance," shouted Diaz, "it is impossible to climb much farther."

"Stop your talking, and proceed," answered Barba.

Piqued at this rejoinder, Diaz climbed somewhat higher. "Now we will see how you will do," he retorted. Just then a rolling rock crushed one of Barba's men, and he dared not stir farther.

"Tell the general that it is impossible to proceed farther, and that even the descent is very dangerous," called out Corral to those below.

Cortes could not see the climbers because of the inequalities in the rock. The cavalry had not been without a share in the danger. Three of the horsemen were killed and seven wounded

by the masses of rock which had bounded down the hill-side and into the plain. When, therefore, Corral's words had passed down the line of clambering soldiers, he gave signals to descend. The survivors reached the ground covered with blood and bruises.

Numbers of warriors had been collecting in the plain below, preparing to attack the rear of the Spanish army. Cortes led his men in a charge upon them. The cavalry galloped two or three miles across the plain, charging to the right and then to the left. They discovered another cliff surmounted by a fortress, and this one seemed more accessible. Cortes decided to move on to this position, especially as his men were suffering for water and could find none where they were. It was with "sad enough feelings," however, that they abandoned this fort, defeated. They encamped for the night without having found water either for man or horse. The enemy added to the discomfort of their situation by making the night hideous with their drums, trumpets, and cries.

In the morning, while the horses were being led several miles away for water, Cortes reconnoitred. This cliff also seemed very difficult of ascent but Cortes found that it was commanded

by a neighboring eminence. He immediately sent a detachment to gain this point, while he led the ascent up the main hill. The garrison concentrated all its forces upon the defense, rolling stones down on the heads of the assaulting party. These, on their part, toiled up the sides of the rock, and the events of the day before seemed likely to be repeated. But the other detachment had already gained the neighboring eminence, from which they poured a steady fire in upon the garrison. The Indians soon threw down their arms and signalled their surrender, Several chiefs descended to confer with Cortes. He treated them very kindly and promised to pardon them if they would induce the garrison, which he had abandoned with so much regret the day before, to surrender. The capitulation of both garrisons was thus speedily brought about. Meantime, some hardy soldiers clambered to the top of the rock. They found that the summit of the cliff extended into a wide plain. A large number of women and children had taken refuge in the fortress with their valuables packed in bales.

Cortes rested here several days, sending the wounded back to Tezcuco. He then returned in the direction of Huaxtepec, which had formerly surrendered to Sandoval. He was well received

by the cacique of the place, and the army was entertained in the beautiful gardens which the Spanish general had not seen before. From here the general again entered the mountains, and descended the southern slope of the Cordilleras, toward a large town called Cuernavaca. which he designed to take if possible. This city was very strongly situated. It was surrounded on three sides by deep gorges. The sides of these rocky ravines are almost perpendicular. They are thus entirely protected from the cold mountain breezes, their rocky walls reflect the heat of a southern sky, and the bottom is filled with a rich tropical vegetation, furnishing the people of the country with the fruits of the tropics, in a temperate region. Cortes found himself on the brink of one of these dizzy ravines, which lay between him and the city. The place was provided, indeed, with wooden drawbridges, but these were raised. Cortes and the cavalry made a circuit of several miles, in search for an entrance. Meantime, some Spanish foot and Tlascalan Indians were also looking for a pass. They found a place where two trees, overhanging the gorge from opposite sides, met. One of the nimble Indians tried this hazardous passage, and crossed. Spaniards and Tlascalans followed to the number of

about thirty. Three of the men who attempted tc cross in this way fell into the ravine below. Bernal Diaz, who was one of the party, says that the attempt was so frightful that in crossing he lost his sight from dizziness, and narrowly escaped falling. The sight of these few men frightened the inhabitants, who thought that the enemy were upon them. They began to flee. While this was going on Cortes and the main Spanish army were engaged with the warriors across the intervening gulf. These annoyed the Spanish troops by stones, arrows, and darts. Meantime, the men who had crossed over on the trees, came up in the rear of the defenders, and began to "cut and slash at them" vehemently. Deceived, like the inhabitants, with the idea that the Spaniards had crossed in numbers, the Indian warriors began to fly. Cortes now galloped to the mountain side of the city, and, having discovered the entrance, undefended led his army in. They pursued the inhabitants, destroying them and driving them into the mountains. The town was set afire. Finally the Indian chiefs came to offer their submission. The army slept that night in the gardens of the city.

On the following day, Cortes turned again toward the valley of Mexico. The weather was

sultry, and the army suffered greatly from thirst, for there was no water to be found in the country. The Indians fainted on the road, and one Spaniard died by the way. Cortes now directed his march through the valley to the city of Xochimilco, built upon the fresh water lake, some ten or fifteen miles from Mexico.

Xochimilco had a large and intelligent population. The people had been informed of the approach of the Spaniards, and they had labored vigorously to defend themselves. They had destroyed the bridges to that part of their city which stood over the water and defended the land side by digging canals. Cortes found these points guarded by an immense body of warriors when he approached the city. He advanced to the attack. The Indians were mowed down by cross-bows and musketry. The Spaniards plunged into the water, and made their way across, some of them losing their lives in the attempt. Meantime, Mexican forces attacked the flanks of the Spanish army. The battle lasted a half hour when the Spanish cavaliers drove the warriors before them through their own streets.

For a time the battle seemed won, but the natives were gathering for a fresh attack. They hoped to surround the Spaniards, and cut them off

from retreat. The latter were somewhat off their guard when a fresh force swept down upon them. Cortes led six horsemen who happened to be at hand against the enemy. The natives fled from fear of the horses. The seven cavaliers galloped beyond the limits of the city in their hot pursuit. They dared brave almost any number of Indians, who stood greatly in dread of their horses. But the Aztecs were courageous. Frequently they turned and waited to meet the cavaliers with sword and shield. Suddenly the horsemen found themselves mixed up in a throng of warriors. Cortes was separated from his companions. His good horse "rode tired under him," and could not be spurred to a vigorous charge. Here was a prize, indeed, for the brave Aztec warriors. They sprang upon the general. His weary horse fell. He endeavored to defend himself with his lance. But of no avail. It was but a moment's work. The Indians had hold of him. They were dragging him away for sacrifice when suddenly some Tlascalans rushed in to his rescue. Five of his servants came up at this moment, and together they beat away the enemy, raised the fallen horse and assisted Cortes to mount. He had had a narrow escape,

Meantime the other Spaniards, divided into

bodies, had been engaged in beating off the Aztec attack in other quarters of the city. Some parties of them, hearing the unusual outcry in the quarter where Cortes was fighting, hurried to the spot, and found the little band of cavalry very much embarrassed among the canals and beset by Indians. The Spaniards forced the enemy to give ground, and brought off the horsemen, who rode back greatly exhausted. Other detachments of the cavalry also came in severely wounded. It was almost night, and the Spaniards were ready to drop with fatigue; but Cortes ordered the bridges which had been destroyed to be filled up with stone and brick, that the cavalry might have free passage in case of an attack. He then posted strong guards, and the army took up their quarters within the city for the night.

Meantime, Guatemozin had heard of the state of the city, and had immediately sent a large force to the rescue. In the morning Cortes ascended a temple. He saw some two thousand canoes, as he thought, filled with Mexican warriors and coming to the rescue of Xochimilco. The advance guard brandished swords taken from the Spaniards on the fatal night retreat. At the same time a large force attacked the army from the rear. But the Spaniards repulsed

them at every point. The cavalry were kept busily charging here and there. Two of the swords were retaken. Some prisoners who were captured confessed that the design of the Mexicans was to wear the Spaniards out by incessant attacks. The latter were now destitute of powder, and obliged to make arrows for their cross-bows as they used them. Cortes decided to abandon the city. He first ordered the houses to be destroyed, as far as possible, by fire.

Eager for spoil, some of the Indian allies and Spanish troops had obtained information of a store of riches which had not been hidden by the inhabitants in some houses approached by a causeway. They made a journey there, and returned loaded with fine cloths and other valuables. Others immediately made the attempt. They were attacked, however, in their isolated position by a body of Mexicans. Many of the Spaniards were badly wounded, and four of them were carried away alive. These unfortunate men were taken to Mexico. Here Guatemozin interviewed them, and obtained information of the small numbers of the Spaniards and their recent losses in killed and wounded. The king then ordered their feet and hands to be cut off, and they were carried around from city to

city in this condition, to strike terror to those who should rebel against him. They were finally put to death.

Cortes drew up his troops in a public square, and arranged the order of march, placing bodies of cavalry in the van, at the rear, and in the centre. He made his men a little speech, reminding them of their danger, and advising them to leave their plunder behind.

"Oh, we are able to defend our properties, our persons, and yours also," answered the men. So the baggage was taken along.

When the people of Xochimilco saw the army march away, they believed it was from fear and fell upon the rear in great numbers. Cortes again planned an ambuscade of his cavalry. He rushed out upon the enemy at the head of his men, and pursued them some distance. But they had been sharper than he this time, and during the pursuit he fell into an Indian ambuscade. The Aztecs sallied out in their turn, wounded all the horsemen, and carried off two of Cortes' attendants, young men of whom he was very fond. The horsemen themselves escaped with difficulty. Cortes joined the main army, shedding tears at the loss of his men.

The Spaniards were now nearing Mexico.

Swarms of warriors attacked them from the lake They made a raid upon the Indian porters who carried the plunder. But the Spaniards threw their lances first to one side and then the other, beating them off. When they passed through Tacuba, it was raining heavily, and a halt was ordered, that the soldiers might shelter themselves in the buildings. Cortes, with his captains and Father Olmedo, ascended the temple to get a view of Mexico. The numerous towns rising out of the water, the darting canoes, and the city itself made the sight a charming one. All admired the scene but Cortes, who was still sad and moody. Father Olmedo tried to console him for his recent loss.

"Those things are but the fortune of war, general," said one of his men.

"I am only sad," answered Cortes, "to think of the dangers and fatigues that we shall have to go through. But I shall shortly put my hand to the task."

The wayworn army finally reached Tezcuco. And here a new danger threatened the grand schemes of Hernando Cortes. A conspiracy had grown in the army under the leadership of an adherent of the governor of Cuba, named Villafana. The conspirators were to give Cortes a

letter purporting to be sent from his father by a vessel which had newly arrived on the coast. While he was reading it, they plotted to assassinate him and his trusty officers with their poniards. At the last moment, a soldier whose heart failed him revealed the plot to Cortes. The latter immediately went to the quarters of Villafana, accompanied by his faithful friends. They found the villain with some of the conspirators. Cortes caused them all to be seized. He then took from the bosom of Villafana a paper containing the signatures of all the conspirators. Having read this paper he destroyed it, in consideration of those concerned. The leader was tried, confessed his guilt, and was put to death. Of the others who had been captured, some were put in prison for a short time, but without further punishment, enough having been done for an example. Cortes now thought it prudent to appoint a body guard. With admirable policy, he always treated the conspirators with great attention. They, on their part, knew that he knew of their guilt, but dared not show a sign which would mark them before their comrades; and, though Cortes was uniformly friendly, he knew against whom he had to guard.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SPANISH BRIGANTINES AND MEXICAN CANOES.

CORTES considered his little fleet of brigantines, propelled by sail and oar, as the "key to the war." They were finished now, and a good canal had been constructed, by Indian workman, for their transportation from the royal gardens to the lake. Cortes held a general muster of his forces. He found that they amounted to eighty cavalry and some eight hundred foot. He had three large cannons and fifteen small, brass field-pieces. He was now well supplied with powder and with copper-tipped lances made by the friendly natives from a pattern which he had furnished them.

Though many of Cortes' men had been sailors, none of them were willing to serve at the oars on the brigantines. Cortes selected those who were natives of sea coast towns, and manned his fleet with them. Many of them objected that they were "gentlemen" and therefore exempt from such menial labor, but Cortes paid no at-

tention. Each little vessel was provided with one of the brass field-pieces by way of artillery.

Cortes had sent word to Tlascala and the other allied provinces that he was now ready to strike the final blow. The Tlascalan forces arrived at Tezcuco a few days earlier than Cortes had appointed. They marched through the streets in all the bravery of their war costumes, shouting "Castile and Tlascala!"

To completely invest Mexico, which was approached by three long causeways Cortes separated his forces into three divisions. The first division, under Alvarado, was to occupy Tacuba, and thus secure the causeway of the fatal retreat; the second, under Olid, was to take up its quarters at the town of Cojohuacan, over-looking the southern causeway, while the third under Sandoval was to attack Iztapalapan, as Cortes dared not leave so strong a post in his rear. To each of these divisions was added an Indian force amounting to from twenty to thirty thousand men, if we may credit Cortes. The general himself took command of his little fleet, which was to complete tne investment by guarding the water side of Mexico.

Cortes had several objects to accomplish before he began the seige. He wished to cut off the city's supply of sweet water, and totally demolish

Iztapalapan, which was too strong a post to leave in his rear. The two divisions under Alvarado and Olid marched to where the great aqueduct, built of wood, stone, and mortar, a monument of the civilization of the Mexicans, crossed the lake. This was stoutly defended by the inhabitants of the city, both by water and by land. But desperately brave as they were, they could not cope with the superior science of the Europeans. The Spaniards captured the aqueduct, and broke it.

The captains now turned their forces toward the causeway, resolved to capture, if possible, one bridge upon it. Their advance was met by immense numbers of warriors, swarming upon the causeway and darkening the water with their canoes. Every moment, fresh re-inforcements arrived, for the Mexicans were determined in the defense of their city. Their first volley of arrows killed three and wounded thirty Spanish soldiers. But the Spanish army advanced, the Mexicans receding before them in order to draw them on. And now the Spaniards found themselves upon the open causeway, their crowded mass making an excellent target for the Mexican warriors in their canoes. These were so well defended by stout wooden shields that the Spaniards were unable to repay them with any effect. The allies proved

only an encumbrance. As for the cavalry, when they made a charge along the causeway, they were soon brought up against a stout barricade defended by Indians armed with long lances. The infantry proved no more effective, for when they advanced against the Mexican army upon the causeway it melted away before them, the warriors throwing themselves into the water on either side. Unable to cope with these slippery forces which momentarily increased, the army retired from the causeway pursued by the Mexicans.

Olid now moved on to Cojohuacan. Alvarado took up his quarters at Tacuba, occupied in daily encounters with the enemy. Olid found the southern causeway as well guarded as that of Tacuba. The two forces scoured the country in the neighborhood with their cavalry, capturing a great deal of corn. But they were pressed hard from the lake side by the brave Mexicans, and longed for the arrival of Cortes with his fleet.

Meantime Sandoval had been despatched to Iztapalapan. On his arrival at this city, he immediately began to attack the inhabitants and set fire to the houses. He secured that quarter which was built on the land, but the warriors made a brave defense of their city. Sandoval was fighting them hard when a column of smoke was

seen to rise from a rocky island in the lake. Immediately smoke could be seen upon the summits of innumerable hills and temples, and the Indian warriors began to draw off. This rising smoke was a signal, indicating that the Mexicans had discovered the approach of Cortes' fleet.

By the aid of sail and oar the little vessels had sped down the lake about the first of May 1521. Near the southern shore, a steep, rocky island rose out of the water. A body of Mexican warriors, together with some inhabitants of the lake shore, held this spot, and it was here that the first smoke signal was given. As the vessels passed close under the rock, they were greeted by volleys of stones and arrows from its summit. Cortes immediately changed his course, landed a hundred and fifty warriors, and clambered up the steep sides of the rocks over the entrenchments on its summit. The Spaniards put every warrior to the sword, but spared the women and children who had taken refuge here. This rock was was named for Cortes after he had received a title of nobility. It was called "the rock of the Marquis." The signals of smoke had aroused Mexico as well as the other cities of the lake. The warriors gathered in their canoes from every quarter to destroy the fleet. Suddenly the Spaniards

descried an immense fleet of canoes in the distance. Cortes said, as nearly as he could judge, they amounted to five hundred boats. They had scarcely ended their battle with the garrison of the rock. Cortes and his men instantly hurried on board their vessels. He ordered his captains by no means to move, but to remain where they were, thus encouraging the Indians to believe that they shrank from the encounter. The fleet of canoes came directly on toward the vessels until within two bowshots when they suddenly stopped and rested quiet, facing the Spanish boats. The hostile fleets remained thus for some time looking at each other. Cortes was very anxious to achieve a signal victory at this encounter, that the Mexicans might learn to dread his brigantines. Suddenly a favorable wind came from the land. Cortes took advantage of it to make an impressive descent upon the enemy. The canvas filled, and the Spanish vessels swooped down upon the lines of light canoes, breaking those they encountered into splinters, and sweeping the water with their artillery. At this destructive shock the Indians fled. The swifter brigantines bore down upon them upsetting the canoes to right and left. "We destroyed many of the enemy in a style worthy of admiration," says Cortes with the enthusiasm

of a general to whom human life is of little account. For "three long leagues" the brigantines pursued their prey, until the Indians had sheltered themselves among the houses of Mexico.

Alvarado's division, out of sight behind the city, did not see the approach of the fleet, but Olid's men were in full view of this water battle. They were inspired with fresh courage when they saw the swift little vessels scattering all before them. They took up their march for the causeway, at which they had heretofore been defeated. They attacked the distracted Mexicans with such force as to gain many of the trenches and barricades by which they were sheltered, and passed horse and foot over some of the bridges on this long reach of causeway. Spaniards and Tlascalans pursued the enemy, until they were checked by some towers containing a Mexican garrison.

It was already evening when Cortes called together his vessels from the pursuit, and sailed toward the long causeway, where the battle was raging This causeway branched, before it reached the shore, into two. At the point of junction, where a broad low wall was built out into the water, were the towers containing idols which had checked Olid's men. The place was called Xoloc. Cortes sailed directly for this spot. With great

spirit, the Mexican garrison defended the towers. But their courage could not avail against the ordnance of the Spaniards. Cortes captured the towers, and immediately landed his three heavy cannon. The whole length of the causeway between Xoloc and the city was black with Mexican warriors, while the neighboring waters swarmed with canoes. He leveled one of the guns, and thus raked the causeway with terrible effect.

Though Cortes had previously meant to take up his quarters on land with Olid, he now resolved upon this position. Having assembled the brigantines near the towers, he sent to Olid's forces, and procured a detachment for this post. He seems to have been ignorant in his investment, of the city of the northern causeway, by which the Mexicans still had free communication with the land. To cut off all communication with the land in such a city was indeed almost impossible. Under cover of the darkness, canoes still carried provisions and water to the city.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CAPTURING THE CAUSEWAYS.

CORTES had no intention of sitting down quietly to await the effects of a slow siege. This indeed would have been quite impossible to enforce with the means in his power. He resolved that a blow should be struck at Mexico every day. The Mexicans themselves were not slow in the defense of their city. Cortes had scarcely stationed himself at the towers of Xoloc, when he was attacked, that very night, by a a multitude of warriors. He says that these people seldom attacked by night unless certain of victory, but they broke through this custom more than once during the siege of Mexico. This time their intended blow was warded off by a steady fire from the brigantines and the Spanish musketeers.

Morning had scarcely dawned, when Cortes' camp was again surrounded by Mexican warriors. He says that as far as the eye could reach, both along the causeway and over the water,

nothing but human beings could be seen. They filled the air with such frightful howls that Cortes declares it seemed as though the world would come to an end. With the aid of their superior arms, the Spaniards drove them along the causeway, stormed an entrenchment which defended a bridge, and crossed the bridge. They drove the Mexicans almost to the city for refuge. The artillery of the little vessels swept the water of canoes on the eastern side of the causeway, but the Mexican boats swarmed on the other side, annoying the Spaniards greatly from this vantage point. To prevent this Cortes had the causeway opened near his encampment, that some of the brigantines might pass through to protect the other side. The vessels now gave chase to the canoes from both sides of the causeway, pursuing them into the suburbs of the city. They had not dared before to enter the city, on account of the shallow water, and the knowledge that the natives had driven stakes under the water to entrap the vessels. The captains now, however, discovered some broad canals, by which they pushed into the city, setting the houses afire and burning a considerable portion of the suburbs. The first day was spent in this manner.

On the following day, Sandoval left Iztapalapan, and marched to a small town on the lake called Mexicaltzinco, part of which was approached by a causeway. Sandoval had an engagement here with the Indians, in which he destroyed the most of their town. While he was engaged in this work, a detachment of warriors was sent from Mexico to destroy the causeway behind the Spaniards, and cut off their retreat. The warriors speedily made a breach in the causeway placing their enemies in a perilous position. But Cortes was informed of the situation of his captain, and sent two brigantines to his assistance. These brigantines were placed in the breach, and formed a bridge, over which the army passed in safety.

Having arrived at Cojohuacan, Sandoval left his infantry here, and, accompanied by ten cavaliers, galloped out on the causeway where Cortes was fighting a battle with the Indians. Horsemen were unable to act on the obstructed causeway, endangered as it was by the long lances with which the Mexicans had supplied themselves for this purpose. The cavaliers accordingly dismounted, and threw themselves into the conflict. The Mexicans battled bravely, but Cortes' cannon did them much injury. Canoes and footmen were beaten back again and again with such

slaughter that they dared not approach the Spaniards, and the bold warriors showed more fear than they had manifested before. Many of the Spaniards were wounded, however. Among them was Sandoval, pierced in the foot with an Indian lance.

Meantime, Alvarado had discovered the unguarded causeway to the north of the city upon which the inhabitants passed back and forth freely. He informed Cortes of this, who immediately ordered Sandoval's division to Tepejacac, an Indian village at the head of this causeway. Wounded as he was, Sandoval set out for this post. The Spaniards indeed were rarely excused on account of wounds, of which almost every soldier had his share.

Since it was quite impossible for the other divisions to act without aid from the water, on account of the swarms of hostile canoes, Cortes sent four brigantines to the aid of Alvarado and two to the aid of Sandoval. The Mexicans were now forced to combat the three invading armies from the land alone.

Cortes had battled for six successive days on the causeway, advancing, storming entrenchments, gaining broken bridges and filling them up, retiring at night, and returning again in the morning

to find fresh breaches and new entrenchments. He now resolved on a concerted attack upon the city. He ordered Alvarado and Sandoval to advance toward Mexico from their different positions. Olid was obliged to use part of his force in defending Cortes' rear; for some of the Indian allies, drawn from neighboring cities had rebelled, and threatened an attack from that quarter.

Cortes sallied forth on foot in the early morning. His troops marched along the causeway, where they soon met an obstacle. The Mexicans had made a breach, the length of a lance in width. On the farther side of this opening, they had thrown up a barricade, from which they defended the opening. A sharp battle ensued at this point. The brigantines which had moved along protecting the flanks of the army were now brought into play. Two of them were moved up along side of the defenders who could not long withstand their brisk cannonade. The gap was now quickly filled up and the army moved on.

They had soon reached the entrance of the city, where stood some towers devoted to the worship of idols. At the base of this structure a large bridge had been raised, and a wide "street of water," as Cortes calls the canals, flowed between the Spaniards and the city. This also was

defended by a strong entrenchment. The Mexicans immediately began to attack the Spaniards. But the brigantines were again brought up, and cleared the way. As soon as the enemy began to fly, the crews sprang upon the causeway, the little vessels were placed side by side in the opening, and the Spaniards passed across them followed by a large force of their Indian allies. The rear of the army then set to work to fill up the breach under Cortes' directions. Meantime, the Spaniards in front had advanced, and gained a new entrenchment by a brisk charge, for it contained no water.

The army pushed on along the street at the heels of the Mexicans. Again they reached another large canal on the opposite side of which was a strong barricade of sun-dried brick. One beam was left across the opening. In a moment's time the nimble Indians had sped across this, and drawn it after them. The brigantines had not been able to advance into the town on account of the shallow water. The Spaniards could not cross without throwing themselves into the water, which they might perhaps have attempted had it not been for the fierce defenders on the other side. The Mexicans attacked the enemy courageously from the barricades and from the neighboring buildings. Cortes now hastened

his archers and musketeers to the spot, and brought up two cannon. With these he soon raked the street to the destruction of the Mexicans and their barricade. The battle lasted for two hours at this spot. No sooner did the enemy give way, than the foremost Spaniards threw themselves into the water, and waded over. At sight of them the last remnant of the Mexicans fled. Cortes immediately set about having this opening filled up.

The Spaniards and their Indian friends pushed eagerly forward for some two bowshots. Here they were met by another bridge, but this had not been raised, for the Mexican, had not imagined the enemy could reach this point. Nor had the Spaniards themselves expected to accomplish so much. This bridge led into the great central square. There stood the great temple, and there were the well remembered palaces of Axayacatl and of Montezuma. The square was thronged with Mexicans. Cortes placed a heavy cannon at its entrance and opened fire upon the dense mass of Indians. So crowded was the square, that though many fell at the mouth of the cannon, no visible effect was made upon the mass. The Spaniards and their allies poured into the square, and the Mexicans fled within the "wall

of serpents" around the temple. The hostile army soon forced them from this refuge. The Mexicans, indeed, seemed to have been overcome with panic at the sight of the Spaniards again within the very heart of Mexico. The Spanish army now took possession of the inclosure with its temples and towers.

But if the Mexicans had for a moment lost their courage, it was but for a moment. They rallied, returned to the temple, attacked the enemy, expelled them from the temples, from the courts, and finally from the whole inclosure. Exposed to great loss and danger, the Spaniards were driven into the square and from the square into the street. They were forced to abandon their cannon. A general rout was imminent, and the Spaniards were likely to fall victims to Mexican revenge when several horsemen galloped upon the scene. At a charge from the dreaded cavalry, the enemy began to fall back. These were soon joined by six more horsemen who formed an ambuscade, and rushing suddenly upon the Mexicans despatched thirty of them. The tide had turned again. The Mexicans were put to flight, and the Spaniards regained possession of the temple court. Some ten or twelve of the principal inhabitants of the city fled for refuge up the great

temple. But they were pursued by a few Spaniards, who overcame them, and killed every man.

It was already evening, and Cortes ordered a retreat. His army was collected, and began to move down the street. But the Mexicans regained their courage, and rushed to the pursuit. They attacked the rear of the army furiously. It became necessary to station the cavalry in the rear. The crossings having been filled up, the horse could act freely. Again and again the cavalry charged upon the Mexicans, destroying numbers of them with their lances. But in spite of their losses the Mexicans renewed the attack. Cortes compares them to rabid dogs. In order to secure their retreat, the Spaniards were obliged to capture some fine houses, from whose elevated terraces the Indians annoyed them greatly. They left these houses in flames. The Mexicans followed them almost to their very encampment.

Meanwhile, the battle was going on as ferociously at each of the other causeways. Guatemozin found means to combat the Spaniards at every one of these points. Alvarado's division suffered the most severely. Here, as at the other causeways, each day's work had to be done over again on the following day. It was quite impossible to hold the bridges when they had been

secured, so that they had every day to be retaken and filled up again. The horses were useless so long as the causeway was daily defended by breaches and entrenchments bristling with long lances. When the Spaniards attempted to enter the city from this quarter, they were met with such storms of arrows and stones from the housetops as to drive back the men on the causeway and the brigantines.

Finding that he gained but little and lost much, Alvarado resolved to change his camp from Tacuba, to a place where the causeway widened, and some towers for idols stood. He left his cavalry and Indian allies at Tacuba, to secure his rear. Here the maize bread upon which the army subsisted was made and forwarded to the camp. The Spaniards then made a slow advance, tearing down the houses, which were difficult to set afire on account of their standing in the water. They filled up the canal crossings as they proceeded, and guarded every pass thus gained night and day. The duty of guarding in so small a force became very irksome to the weary Spaniards.

It was the rainy season. The constant tramp of the army rendered the causeways very muddy. The soldiers marched, fought, and labored all day,

returned to their shelterless camp at night, to dress their wounds as best they might, and eat their provisions of corn cakes with herbs, and sometimes the addition of Indian figs. Their night's rest was broken by the guard duty, or the war-cry of the enemy, and the rush to arms.

After the last great effort, Cortes had remained in camp three days. During this time more allies had flocked to his standard, impressed by his success. The young chief Ixthilochitl, had joined Cortes with a large force. These Indians carried all the ferocity of savage war into the struggle. In the raids upon the city, they cut off the flesh of dead Mexicans, and displayed it before the inhabitants, assuring them that they intended to eat it, which they indeed did. On the other hand, such food furnished sustenance for the Mexicans. They had allies in many neighboring cities which still held to their allegiance, and furnished fresh recruits for the war, at the beating of the great drum upon the temple. But it was not without dismay that the Mexicans saw the people of Tezcuco, Chalco, Xochimilco, and Otumba, attacking their city and calling out the names of their several provinces.

Cortes had resolved to strike another telling blow, that he might, if possible, bring the enemy

to terms. He never omitted his religious observances. This morning, as before all his other great undertakings, mass was said, and Cortes marched out on the causeway accompanied by some fifteen or twenty cavalry, three hundred infantry, and an "infinite host" of Indian allies as he says. The army had advanced three bow-shots along the causeway, when it was met by an advancing Mexican force.

Guatemozin had not wasted his three days of respite from this quarter. The breaches had been cleared of the *debris* with which Cortes had filled them, fresh barricades had been constructed, and every thing rendered more impassable than before. Again the Spanish brigantines advanced, pouring a fire of cannon shot and musketry, from their decks, upon the Mexican army. These carried great destruction into the Mexican ranks, and at last the defending army retreated behind the next barricade. The Spanish army pushed slowly on in the face of such resistance, building bridges behind them and capturing breaches before. As the Spaniards entered the city, where the brigantines could not follow, they only carried the canals with great hazard and labor.

Again the Spaniards pushed their way into the great square of Mexico, driving the inhabi-

tants before them. There Cortes ordered a halt while he finished the work of filling up the canals in the rear. It was nearly evening before this was accomplished. Meantime, the exasperated Mexicans attacked the Spaniards again and again in the public square. Cortes was obliged to lead the cavalry to the assistance of his men. He scoured the neighboring streets, driving the inhabitants at the point of the lance into the water.

Thinking to dismay the Mexicans and drive them to submission, before they suffered farther, Cortes ordered the great palaces of the square to be destroyed. He said that it grieved him much, but, as it grieved the enemy more, he resolved to do it. The soldiers went at the work with zest. Especially did they enjoy the destruction of the scarred and battered palace of Axayacatl, the scene of their past sufferings. The walls were mostly of stone; but the supports were beams of wood, and there was a great deal of wood work on the inside. This was soon in a blaze, and crash after crash announced the fall of the walls. Near the palaces stood Montezuma's aviaries, "gay and elegant buildings, according to Cortes. He set fire to these structures also. The Mexicans saw this destruction of their finest edifices with great sorrow and dismay. But they were not daunted;

they never once thought of submitting to the hard conquerors.

Night had come on and Cortes ordered a retreat. The Spaniards had no sooner turned their back upon the square than the Mexicans rushed upon them in pursuit. The Spanish cavalry turned and charged them, overtaking them and piercing them with their lances. Still they attacked the rear, again and again, filling the air with their war-cries.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A MEXICAN VICTORY

NEVER had there been so strange a siege as the siege of Mexico, and never was city more desperately defended. Cortes hourly expected the inhabitants to sue for peace, but still no such message came. The warriors only increased in fury. Cortes had cut off, as far as possible, all communication with the mainland, by keeping his vessels cruising about the city night and day. In this way many canoes and prisoners were captured. The Mexicans, on their part, tried every means to capture the Spanish vessels. Once they chose a place where they planted stakes under the water. Near here they placed some thirty canoes in ambush among the reeds. One or two canoes then paddled out as decoys. The captains of two brigantines saw them, and pursued. The natives in the canoes appeared greatly frightened, and paddled rapidly for shore. The brigantines swooped down upon them, but only to stick fast on the hidden piles in the water.

Instantly the concealed canoes pushed out from the reeds, and surrounded the vessels, attacking the crews. Both of the captains were killed, one of whom was Barba, and the brigantines fell into the hands of the natives. Cortes was as much exasperated as the Mexicans were delighted at this event.

One night, as the brigantines were scouring the lake, they captured some important prisoners, from whom Cortes learned that the Mexicans had laid another ambuscade for his vessels. He immediately sent six of his vessels with muffled oars to a certain place on the lake shore, where they were concealed by the tall reeds and the darkness. A single brigantine was then sent out as if in search of canoes. Desirous of capturing her, the Mexicans played their old trick of sending out several canoes, apparently loaded with provisions for the city. The brigantine gave chase. The canoes fled, as before, for their ambuscade. The brigantine pursued, but, as she neared the trap, held off as if from some suspicion. The canoes in ambuscade then rushed out to the attack. Immediately the brigantine gave the signal of two shots, when the six concealed vessels pushed out from their hiding-place. They ran down several canoes, and dispersed the

rest, returning with many prisoners. Thus Cortes cured the Mexicans of ambuscades on the water.

Guatemozin's forces advanced in three bodies upon Alvarado's divisions. An army of his allies engaged Alvarado and the cavalry in the rear at Tacuba. A band of Mexicans then approached along the street and another over the ruins of the buildings which the Spaniards had destroyed. The Spaniards themselves advanced to meet them at a barricade which the Mexicans had thrown across the way. They stormed the barricade and captured it. Just on the other side they found a broken bridge. But the Spaniards plunged in and waded up to their necks through the water. They sprang out on the other side, and continued the pursuit, without waiting to fill up the canal, as Cortes had ordered them always to do. The Mexicans, being re-inforced, suddenly turned upon them, and attacked them from street and house-top. Forced back, the Spaniards made an orderly retreat to the broken bridge. But they found this place taken possession of by the Mexican canoes. The Spanish brigantines were unable to approach; for the Mexicans had previously fortified the spot with hidden piles, and the brigantines lost two men in attempting to pass. The Spaniards threw themselves into the water to either

side of the causeway, and attempted to wade over. But they found themselves caught in a trap. The whole thing had been preconcerted among the Mexicans, and pits had been dug in the lake bottom to trip up the waders. Those who could not swim were helpless. Most of the Spaniards were wounded, and five men were taken alive by the Mexicans.

Having learned a lesson by this defeat, Alvarado's men spent four days in filling up this disastrous breach. They established their advanced post at this point, and the Mexicans established one opposite. In the night, when the latter kept guard, they built a great fire in front, so that the enemy could not see them, except when their dusky forms appeared renewing the fire, which was sometimes extinguished by the rains.

Meantime, Cortes had followed up his last successful attack on the following day. But though the Spaniards were early on the march, the Mexicans had already cleared away the bridges at two of the canals. More determined than ever, they faced the enemy on the brink of these gaps. There was nothing for the Spaniards, but to throw themselves into the water and swim to the opposite side, where the Mexicans opposed their landing, slashing with sword and knife and

thrusting them down with lances. It took from eight o'clock in the morning until one in the afternoon to gain these two passes, so desperately did the Mexicans defend them. The Spaniards pushed on to the square, and there remained only time to gain two canals down the broad and noble street to Tacuba, which Alvarado was forcing at the other end. Leaving the houses of this quarter in flames, the Spaniards began their retreat, for it was now night. On came the Mexicans at their heels. So impetuously did they pursue that one would think them to be the victors and the Spaniards the vanquished. Sometimes the Spanish rear would wheel upon them, and capture some dozen of the boldest pursuers. Again the cavalry would drop behind some ruined walls, and wait while the flying army hurried by with the Mexicans in close pursuit. Then they would sally forth, striking their lances to the right and left among the brave Indian warriors. But, though they always suffered for it, Cortes says "their conduct was certainly worthy of admiration;" for no matter how great their losses, they never relaxed their pursuit, until they had seen the Spaniards out of the city.

But, one by one, the cities of the valley were

dropping away from Guatemozin. They began to dread the vengeance of the Spaniards and their allies, while they saw no chance of succor from Mexico. From time to time, they sent in allegiance to Cortes. He always accepted it with the proviso that they should prove their sincerity by assisting in the war against the capital. He hoped to daunt the courage of the Mexicans by turning their own neighbors against them. But Guatemozin, on his part, had resolved to wear the Spaniards out by continual attacks. On the very anniversary of their former entry into Mexico, he attacked them by night. These attacks were repeated again and again. The few soldiers who fell at every engagement must have gradually thinned the ranks of the Spaniards.

Day after day, Cortes continued his raids within the city. The Spaniards always came off victorious, slaying great numbers of the inhabitants, with cannons, muskets, and cross-bows. Every hour Cortes looked for proposals of peace, but still none came. He resolved to make an attack every day, until he had reduced the city to submission. He gathered recruits of warriors in their canoes from the lake cities in alliance with him. He sent his brigantines with detachments of these canoes to the several quarters of

the city, with orders to accomplish as much destruction as they could. The captains then marched from their several positions to the attack. Cortes again led his forces down the broad avenue by which he always entered, and which was this time unbroken by fresh breaches. Arrived at the public square, he turned into the street that leads to Tacuba, sending detachments of his men into the streets on either side of him, by way of defending his operations. Cortes then took three canals, and had them filled up. Night came on, and his forces returned to camp with much spoil. This day Alvarado and Sandoval were also successful in their advance toward the heart of the city. For once, the Mexicans had seemed intimidated, and the Spaniards believed that they had virtually gained three-fourths of the city. Cortes was quite certain the Mexicans would now sue for peace. But no sign of submission came. Nevertheless, the Spaniards returned with light hearts to camp, feeling that their task was nearly finished.

The men of Alvarado's detachment were becoming jealous of Cortes' troops having entered the other end of the street up which they were bravely pushing their way. The Mexicans were still in possession of the great market place of

the city, which the Spaniards had so much admired in the days of Montezuma. The men of both divisions were ambitious of the glory of first capturing this square. Fired by their successes, many of the Spaniards thought that the victory would be gained, if the market place was captured. Cortes, however, was cautious about attempting a spot where he saw so many obstructions that his men did not think of. This part of the city was intersected with many canals, every one of which was a serious obstacle to the progress of the army. But he finally called a council of war, at which this move was decided upon. Cortes sent messages to Alvarado and to Sandoval to join forces and attempt to reach the market place from the causeway of Tacuba, while he made the attempt from the southern causeway. Nevertheless, he told them that he did not oblige them to take a single step which might lead to disaster, for he well knew that these brave men would follow his orders, though it cost them their lives.

The Spaniards were in movement early the following morning. Seven brigantines, with a large number of Indian canoes, were sent on their usual destructive expedition around the suburbs of the city. Cortes marched directly into Mexico,

his forces somewhat augmented by a detachment from the other divisions of his army. Arrived within the city, he divided his men into three bodies, with which he proposed to take the three streets which terminated in the great market place. Alderette, the king's treasurer, with seventy Spaniards and a large force of Indians—to which was added seven or eight cavalry as a rear guard, and a dozen men with pick-axes to fill up the canals—was to march up the widest avenue. Two captains were ordered to charge up the second; with a body of eighty Spaniards and another large force of allies. Cortes then undertook the narrowest and most difficult street afoot, with some hundred infantry and the additional Indian force.

For a time the parallel armies in the several streets carried all before them. Already they were nearing the great square. Cortes had dropped behind to settle some difficulty among the Indian allies. The division in the main avenue sent him word that they had almost reached their goal, and wanted permission to proceed; for they could now hear the noise of the combat of Alvarado and Sandoval, at the other side of the city.

"By no means go forward without leaving

your bridges well filled up, so that, if it become necessary to retreat, there may be no obstacle in the road, for in this lies all the danger," was the general's message in return.

The Spaniards sent back word: "All that we have gained is in good condition. You may come and see for yourself."

They hurried on. But Cortes suspected, from the rapidity of their progress, that something was wrong. Accompanied by some fifteen or twenty Spaniards, he went to examine the wide avenue over which they had passed. It was as he had feared. The hot-headed soldiers had left a breach behind them, some ten or twelve paces in width. The water at this point was ten feet deep. The soldiers had indeed thrown in wood and reeds, and, having crossed it carefully and a few at a time, this slight bridge had sustained them. As Cortes said, "they were so intoxicated with the pleasure of victory, that they thought it sufficiently firm." And on they went.

As Cortes reached this spot, he suddenly heard an unusual din of war-like cries, and the rush of feet. The Spaniards and allies were retreating in hot haste down the street, and the Mexicans were after them "like dogs in pursuit.'

"Hold! hold!" cried Cortes in despair.

But it was of no use. Already the water of the canal was filled with Spaniards and Indian allies. So densely were they packed that Cortes said there did not seem to be room for a straw to float in it. The Mexicans were so fierce in their pursuit that they threw themselves into the water after the Spaniards. And now the Mexican canoes seemed to spring from the bottom of the water, so suddenly did they appear upon the scene.

It was but the affair of a moment, when Cortes saw his men being killed or carried off alive by the enemy. The way in which he could do the most good was to save as many men as possible. He and those who were with him gave their hands to the drowning men, and drew them from the water, some wounded, some half-drowned, and most of them unarmed. As they were rescued, Cortes sent them on. So bent were these few Spaniards on saving their comrades, that they did not notice the swift gathering of a cloud of Mexican warriors. Already they are pressing upon Cortes and his few companions, but the general is so eager in giving his hands to sinking men that he has not noticed them. Several Mexicans rush forward and seize him. They are about to bear him off. They ar-

to be revenged, their country is to be saved, and the war-god will rejoice in a victim to his taste. But a brave Spanish youth sprang forward: brought his sword down upon the arms of the captors, cutting them off at one blow, it is said, when he was slain by the Mexicans. Quinones, the captain of Cortes' body guard, now rushed to the scene, and rescued Cortes from his assailants.

"Let us leave this place and save your life," said Quinones; "for you know that without you, none of us can escape."

But Cortes would not. He wished to remain by his men, though he was already wounded in his leg. Without further ado, the faithful captain took the general up in his arms, and carried him away. At this moment Cortes felt that he would rather die than live; but, urged by his companions, he joined them, and they made their way through the enemy with sword and buckler. Just then a devoted servant of the general was seen pushing forward on horseback, but a lance thrown from a neighboring terrace struck him in the throat and killed him. Another servant brought Cortes a horse to ride, and he mounted to take the command of the retreat. The mêlée of flying, disabled, unarmed Spaniards and In-

dians had crowded forward to where the street was narrow and surrounded upon either side by canals. These swarmed with Mexican canoes. The warriors were engaged in killing and capturing men from either side. The mud on the street had become so deep that it was almost impossible to stand. Many were jostled into the water by the panic-stricken crowd.

Cortes extricated his men as best he could from this fatal trap. Arrived at the wide street of Tacuba, he got the remnant into something like order, and, joining some eight or nine cavalry, protected the rear, which was hotly beset by the victorious Mexicans. Falling back toward the public square, Cortes sent word to his two other divisions to effect their retreat as regularly as possible. This they did without loss, for they had not left any breaches in their rear. Cortes' army was soon assembled in the great square. They were attacked upon all sides by the Mexicans. The Spaniards could discern the burning of perfumed incense on the great temple, in honor of their victory. Chagrined and disheartened, the army made their way back to camp, it being much earlier in the day than their usual return.

As for Sandoval and Alvarado, they had been

at first victorious, and had pushed their way bravely on. But no sooner had the Mexicans defeated Cortes than the victors marched to this part of the city, displaying much pomp, plumes, and strange devices. They threw before the Spaniards some bleeding heads.

"Here are the heads of Malinche and his officers," they cried. "This will soon be your fate."

With this, they rushed upon the Spaniards, grappling with them foot to foot. They were forced to retreat. As they fell back, they heard the sound of the great serpent-skin drum, announcing the sacrifice of some of their comrades upon the summit of the great temple. A shrill horn, by which Guatemozin urged on his warriors, now sounded, and the Mexicans redoubled the fury of their pursuit. But the Spaniards escaped in safety to their camp, where they anxiously wondered whether Cortes were indeed dead, and whether there was anything left of his army.

Even the brigantines were defeated on this day. Two of them failed to return, and Cortes' heart sank within him at the thought that they too were lost.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOPE FOR MEXICO.

THE Mexicans were filled with joy at this signal victory. The city resounded with the noise of drums and horns and the shouts of rejoicing. Her warriors took fresh courage. They tore away the bridges, built with so much labor by the Spaniards; they raised anew the entrenchments and defensive works; they advanced their posts again to the limits of the city. Their guard, indeed, built its watch-fires fairly in the face of Cortes' camp. But the Spaniards, weary, wounded, and destitute of arms, were too much discomfited to oppose them. The Mexicans gained fresh hope. Their gods, appeased by the living victims which daily graced their temples, promised them a complete victory over the enemy within eight days. Guatemozin sent messengers to the provinces, bearing several heads of Spaniards and two horses' heads as credentials, with word that the people were by no means to make peace with the strangers, for he would soon put an end to them.

On the day of the defeat, Sandoval had returned to his quarters. The Mexicans had thrown before him the heads of his slain comrades. The cool, young commander was not to be terrified, however. He warned his men to keep a good countenance. Leaving them safe in their camp, he mounted his fine battle-horse, and galloped along the lake-shore toward the camp of Cortes, determined to ascertain the extent of the disaster. Several times he was assailed by the enemy, who had become very bold, but he pushed on unharmed.

"I bring you my condolence, General, for your losses, and how is it that such a disaster has come upon you?" asked Sandoval, as he rode into camp.

"Son Sandoval," Cortes answered the young man affectionately, and with tears in his eyes, "it is for my sins that I have merited such a misfortune. But the fault is with the treasurer Alderette, who was ordered to fill up the bad pass where the enemy threw us into confusion."

"The fault lies with Cortes himself," loudly exclaimed Alderette, with the freedom of this camp of adventurers. "He never gave me any such orders; but hurried us on after the enemy calling out, 'Forward, gentlemen, forward.'"

A hot dispute ensued between the general and his officer, in this moment of disappointment and chagrin. Just then, the two missing brigantines came in sight. Though Cortes had believed them lost, he had kept up a stout heart and a cheerful face in the presence of his comrades, maintaining that they would return. He could not now conceal his joy at this relief from his fears. He turned to Sandoval.

"I shall have to ask you," said he, "to take charge of our affairs, for I am at present unable to do so. Go now to Alvarado's quarters at Tacuba, for I fear the weight of the enemy's attack will fall upon this post."

In the reports which Cortes sent to these other posts, he at first concealed the real extent of his losses, fearing to discourage his men. So far as we can judge from the comparison of the chronicles we have of these days, even in his letters to the emperor, Cortes was too apt to conceal or underrate his losses in battle, and to exaggerate the numbers of his allies and of his enemies. He stated the loss of this battle at twenty-five to his men, and in his letter at thirty-five or forty, while Bernal Diaz states it at seventy-two. The last number is probably nearer the truth. From forty to sixty of these were taken alive

and seven horses and two field pieces captured. Cortes lumps the loss of his allies at more than a thousand, and there were probably many more of them killed than of the Spaniards, as their numbers were very much greater.

Sandoval galloped for Tacuba. It was evening when he arrived there, but he found the Spaniards hard pressed, repelling a Mexican attack. Bernal Diaz says that he, with other Spaniards, was at this time standing, waist deep, in the water, defending a vessel which had got aground, and which the Mexicans were trying hard to capture. Two of her crew were already killed and many of them wounded. Just as Sandoval rode up, with one united effort the soldiers got her afloat again. The Mexicans continued their attack with redoubled fury. Sandoval received a blow in the face with a stone. He saw there was no time to be lost.

"Retreat, gentlemen, retreat, if you do not want all the cavalry to be destroyed," he cried.

They made their way back. The Mexicans followed them, unmindful of the destruction of the Spanish artillery which swept the causeway. Arrived at camp, the Spaniards were allowed a little respite. They were eagerly recounting and comparing the events of the day at the different

posts, when the horrid sound of the great drum of Mexico struck upon their ears, followed by the clashing and blowing of Aztec musical instruments. This camp was much nearer the great square than the others. Every Spaniard turned, and looked toward the temple. By the glare of the fires on its summit, the wild priests of Huitzilopotchtli, could be seen winding up the temple stairs, to the sound of their mournful music. They drove some victims before them. When they had reached the summit, the Spaniards could discern the white bodies of some of their comrades among the prisoners. These were decorated with plumes, and made to dance before the sanctuaries. Finally they were laid upon the stone, and sacrificed. The sensations of the Spaniards, who could not withdraw their eyes from this scene, were sickening. Never had the horrors of battle affected them as this horrible rite did. Every man put up a prayer to heaven to be saved from such a fate. Bernal Diaz said that he never afterwards entered battle without a sinking feeling about his heart.

Night after night, the Spaniards heard the sound of the "accursed drum" until all the victims had been executed. The mangled remains

of these rites, were thrown among the allies by the Mexicans.

"This will soon be your fate. The gods have promised it, that in eight days we shall conquer," they cried.

And these gods were the gods of the allies. The promises of the deities conveyed through their priests had a real significance to them. They dared not await the expiration of the time. Indian-like and, indeed, human-like they were as greatly discouraged by defeat as they had been impressed by victory. They stole away in bands. Their forces melted like ice in the sun. Ixthilxochitl, whose unpronounceable name Bernal Diaz softens into Suchel, alone remained with Cortes' division, with some forty of his followers. A chief and some fifty followers, now composed Sandoval's force of allies, while the brave Tlascalan, Chichimecatl, with some eighty followers, still stood by Alvarado. Even these few men wavered in their faithfulness. Cortes asked them why their countrymen had deserted him.

"The gods of the Mexicans have predicted your destruction," they solemnly answered; and added, "We see you all wounded, many are killed, our own loss is great, and Xicotencatl, from the first foretold that we should all lose our

lives. Therefore, considering you as lost, our warriors have forsaken you."

Cortes inwardly admitted that all this was much too true; but he put a cheerful face on the matter, ridiculed the Mexican predictions, and managed to induce this handful to stay by him.

There was for a time a cessation of attacks on the part of the Spaniards, who needed rest, but by no means on the part of the Mexicans. The Spaniards had always to be on the defensive. Every fresh sacrifice was followed by a furious attack from the Mexicans, whose bitter hatred seemed renewed by this barbarous rite. Against Alvarado's division, which was on the shortest avenue to their city, they especially directed their hostilities. At this post, the entire force of infantry kept guard on the causeway by night, flanked by the brigantines. Half of the cavalry patrolled in Tacuba, half on the causeway. In the day-time they must be always in readiness for the enemy.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE DESTRUCTION OF MEXICO.

"CUT off the provisions and water of the Mexicans. There are so many warriors; how can they subsist? Their provisions must at some time be used up; the water they get from wells is salt; and they have no resource but from the frequent rains. Fight them by hunger and thirst, and do not throw away your men."

Such was the advice that the young chief of the unpronounceable name gave to Cortes. The idea of waiting for hunger to do the work, was not a new one to the Spaniards; but they had been too impatient to await a protracted siege, with enemies behind them and the uncertainty of what was going on with regard to the conquest of Mexico in the old world to goad them forward. Cortes was revolving a new plan of operations in his mind. But he was destitute of powder and other military stores. While the Spaniards were in the midst of their discomfiture and discouragement, messengers came to

Cortes from two allied provinces, complaining of the inroads of Mexican provinces and calling for assistance. As Cortes says, the Spaniards were, indeed, "in a situation rather to require succor than to give it." But he felt that once to appear to waver, once to show a sign of weakness, would be their ruin. His officers were greatly opposed to his sending away any of his force; but in spite of this, Cortes sent detachments under Tapia and Sandoval to the assistance of his allies. Both of these officers met the enemy in battle, came off victorious, and returned in a short time, having reduced the threatening Mexican provinces to submission.

Fortunately for the schemes of Cortes, a ship of Ponce de Leon, the discoverer of Florida, was driven from this peninsula to Villa Rica. She was loaded with ammunition, and thus Cortes was supplied with powder and cross-bows for his further operations.

For forty-five days, the Spaniards had besieged the city of Mexico. The whole surrounding country had submitted to them, in so much that there was not a friendly town left around the lake shore, from which the people of Mexico could procure corn, meat, fruit, or water. The Spaniards assured them that they would never

cease to carry on the war by land or water, until the city submitted. But in vain. Never had the Mexicans shown fewer signs of weakness, never had they displayed greater spirit. Cortes resolved no longer to risk the lives of his men over the treacherous canals, so laborously filled up by the Spaniards and so industriously cleared away by the Mexicans. He would raze Mexico to the ground as he advanced, her ruins should fill up her water courses, so that they could no longer be opened. It was not without sorrow that the stern conqueror came to this conclusion, for he enthusiastically declares that "Mexico was the most beautiful object in the world."

The eight days of the Mexican prediction had expired, and still the Spaniards invested Mexico. The Tlascalans began to be ashamed and returned to the war. Ixthilochitl induced numbers of Tezucan warriors to enter the field, and Cortes found himself prepared for a fresh attempt.

While these preparations were going forward in the Spanish camp, the Mexicans were busily concerting plans for their future defense, opening bridges, building barricades, and covering the public square and some of the streets with huge stones, to impede the movements of the cavalry.

Before renewing his attacks, Cortes resolved

to make one more attempt to bring the Mexicans to terms. He held three men of consequence prisoners, and he proposed to these to carry a message for him to their king. They refused, saying that Guatemozin would certainly put them to death, if they appeared with such an errand. After some difficulty Cortes prevailed upon them to carry his message. With tears they asked him for a letter, which though it could not be read, would serve as their credentials. Cortes supplied them with one.

"Tell your king," said he, "that, from the affection I bear the family of the great Montezuma, and in order to prevent the destruction of Mexico and the loss of lives, I am willing to treat for peace. He must know that, as his people are cut off from all provisions and water, and as all the nations which were formerly subject to Mexico, are now our allies, we will certainly soon conquer."

When this message was first delivered to Guatemozin, he appeared greatly enraged. But, recovering his temper, he called a council of the nobles and priests of the city. The hopelessness of their position, the desertion of his subjects from without and the distress within were all freely discussed. There were those who were in favor of suing for peace, and the young

king, perhaps, was inclined that way. But the priests, whose influence lay in the religion which the Spaniards sought to destroy, were opposed to submission in any form.

"Look at the conduct of these strangers from the first," said they. "See how they treated your uncle, the great Montezuma, Cacama, and the various other princes who were in their power. Think how they have grasped and wasted the wealth of the kingdom, and branded as slaves, others whom they have conquered. This Malinche is always insidious in his offers. Remember your own fame as a warrior and the promises of the gods, and never submit to him."

This speech touched Guatemozin's sense of honor so adroitly, that he determined never to be found in the position in which Montezuma had placed himself. He turned his attention to the saving of the remaining provisions, the procuring of water, and the endeavor to procure assistance by means of canoes sent out at night. For two days the Spaniards waited for an answer to their embassy, and it came. The Mexicans poured out, like roaring lions in a fresh attack upon Alvarado's camp.

"Cowards! cowards!" cried they. "Peace is for women, and arms for men."

Meantime, Cortes had been making his preparations for the final attack upon Mexico. He called together the chiefs of his Indian allies, and requested them to join him with a large number of men, provided with the coa, a wooden tool which was used as a hoe among the natives. Again the Spanish armies marched into the city, again the brigantines and their fleet of Indian canoes attacked the outskirts of Mexico. Cortes had scarcely begun hostilities when the Mexicans made signs from behind a canal and entrenchment for a parley. They told the general that some one had gone to call Guatemozin. Cortes ordered his men to desist from fighting and exchanging taunts with the enemy. For more than an hour he waited, when Guatemozin's answer came in showers of arrows, darts, and stones. Whereupon the Spaniards attacked and captured the canal and entrenchment. They found their movements greatly embarrassed by the large stones which the Mexicans had placed in the streets.

At four points the work of destruction was now going forward. The various divisions of Spaniards and allies drove the brave Mexicans from their defenses. The Indian workmen then leveled the buildings, and filled the canals as

they were captured with the ruins. The Mexicans were exasperated beyond measure to see the monuments of their skill, toil, and wealth burned and destroyed by the people of their own race.

"You will have the labor of rebuilding all these," they cried to the destroyers; "for, if we prevail, you know it will be so, and, if the Spaniards prevail, you will still have to rebuild for them."

Alvarado was the first to reach the great temple this time. It was stoutly defended by the Mexicans. They were headed by their fierce priests. Once or twice they drove the Spaniards down the temple stairs. Others fought the Spaniards from below. But at last the strangers have again taken the great temple. Cortes, from where he is battling, some distance away, sees smoke arising from its summits. He trembles for a moment, as he thinks that this may be a new sacrifice of human beings. But no, the sanctuaries are in a blaze. Alvarado had taken the the temple. Heaven be praised! For the Spaniards really believed that they were serving God as well as their king.

Day after day, Cortes entered the city. Each day the work of destruction progressed farther. Each evening, as he retired, the Mexicans fol-

lowed fast at his heels, believing he was inspired by fear. The din of battle filled the air continually. The shouting, calling and whistling of the enemy, the blowing and clashing of their instruments of music, the tramp and rush of feet hither and thither, the destructive hammering at the buildings, the rumble of falling walls, the roar of flames, the crash of a roof going in, the reports of cannon and musketry, and the constant flinging back and forth of taunts filled the air. Even the night was made hideous by the Mexicans, for savage warriors always think to impress the enemy by much use of the lungs.

More than once Cortes planned an ambuscade to rid himself of the pursuing Mexicans, and also to do them as much injury as possible. Once he placed a force in hiding, and, at the time of retreating from the city, arranged that the cavalry should make a motion as if about to attack the Mexicans, and then retreat with an appearance of faint-heartedness. The least want of courage was noted by these fierce warriors. They rushed after the retreating army with the utmost fury, shouting as though they had gained a great victory, As they passed a cross street where the ambush was laid, a musket was fired as a signal, and, with the usual watch-word, the Spaniards fell upon

their prey, slaughtering them in great numbers. The consternation of the Mexicans was so great at this disaster, that they did not shout once during the whole evening. The Spaniards lost a horse on this day. Her rider being unhorsed, the animal fled to the enemy, who met her with such a shower of missiles, that the poor creature turned back again, and returned to the Spanish camp, where she soon after died. The loss of a horse was always a serious one; but the Spaniards were thankful that the animal had not died among the Mexicans, for such an event always caused them great joy and exultation.

The Mexicans were now entirely destitute of food. Their meals of human flesh were scanty, since they had no longer the power to do the enemy any serious damage. They were famished and disheartened. Already they were perishing of hunger. Throngs of people fished by night in the canals, and poured over the ruined portions of the city, in search of roots and herbs to gnaw. But they never once thought of capitulating to be branded as slaves by the Spaniards. Guatemozin did not once think of submitting to become a tool, like Montezuma, in the hands of the white man.

Now that the cause of Mexico seemed hope-

less, the Spaniards were in no want of allies for their work of destruction. The natives flocked in great numbers to the Spanish standard, especially as there was much plunder to be gotten within the city. Having heard from prisoners that the miserable inhabitants swarmed over the city at night to procure food, Cortes resolved to strike a blow which would do them as much injury as possible, hoping thus to bring them to terms. Before daylight, the Spanish army was on the move, and the brigantines sailed forth toward the canals, by which they could enter Mexico. The Spaniards stole in to the city, hid themselves in ambush, and when day dawned rushed forth, and attacked "the enemy"—a miserable multitude of people in search of food, most of them unarmed, many of them women and children. More than eight hundred of them were either killed or taken, according to Cortes. The Spaniards now made their usual destructive progress in the city, this time unmolested by the Mexican warriors who were stunned by the blow just dealt them. The Spanish army returned to camp, laden with spoil.

At last the three divisions of the army met. The Mexicans had long fortified themselves in a great pile of buildings surrounded by canals,

Guatemozin had used this structure as his palace. The Mexicans were driven from this post, and the buildings destroyed. The day was busily spent in filling up canals level with the ground. Three-quarters of the city was now in the possession of the Spaniards. The people had retired to the strongest portion of Mexico, toward the open lake. The houses of this quarter were poor buildings standing on piles in the water

The Spaniards pushed on toward the market-place, the last stronghold of the Mexicans. They captured, with much fighting and severe labor, a great "street of water" which they filled up. "Nothing was to be heard on either side of the principal street," says Cortes' "but the burning and demolition of houses, which it was painful to behold; but our purposes required it, and it was necessary to proceed in this way." Finally, nothing but a canal and an entrenchment remained between the Spaniards and the great market. Early one morning they rode toward the spot which was defended by the indomitable Mexicans. An ensign and several Spaniards sprang into the water and began making their way across. Immediately the Mexicans fled. The water was speedily filled up, and the cavalry passed over. They galloped into the market-place, admiring the arcades which

surrounded it and which were still filled with Mexicans. The ground was strewn with half-eaten roots and bark, which told the tale of dire famine. Cortes ascended a tower which adjoined the market-place, where he found the heads of some Spaniards and Tlascalans. He now surveyed the city. The smoking ruins which marked the portion the Spaniards had captured, comprised seven eighths of Mexico. The Mexicans were huddled together in the small houses which remained to them. Considering that so many people could not live in so small a space and that they were already much reduced by famine, he resolved to discontinue hostilities for a few days, in hopes that the people might be induced to submit

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE CAPTURE OF GUATEMOZIN.

CORTES said that it gave him much sorrow to continue to harass the Mexicans. This was undoubtedly true, but he had another reason, as he himself admits, which made him anxious to bring the Mexicans to terms before hostilities had gone any farther. He had no doubt that they had much riches in their possession which he was anxious to secure. If he reduced the people by force, they would very likely throw their treasure into the water rather than allow the Spaniards to get it. What was procured would fall into the hands of the plundering Spanish soldiery and the Indian allies, who would be very unlikely to deliver it over to the authorities, especially in the light of past transactions in the division of treasure and slaves. But, though the Mexicans were dying like sheep of hunger and thirst, their bodies were thrown for concealment into the water, and the survivors still held out.

Cortes had kept his carpenters busy for some

fifteen days on a battering-engine. By means of this machine, he hoped to supply the place of powder, which was running very low, and frighten the Mexicans into submission. This engine was erected in the centre of the market-place where there was a sort of raised building designed for the public games and amusements of the people, who occupied the arcades on such occasions. The whole thing proved a miserable failure. The carpenters did not understand the making of such a machine and the battering-engine refused to batter. The Spaniards covered up their failure from the Mexicans by pretending that out of compassion for them they refrained from using this terrible engine. The Mexicans kept at a safe distance from it, but were by no means frightened into submission by it.

Hostilities had been suspended for three or four days and now numbers of women and children, wretched objects, dying of hunger or wandering about with haggard looks, filled the streets. Cortes says it was "the most melancholy spectacle in the world," and he ordered that no harm should be done them. Still the warriors kept within their defences in their miserable "nook" of the city.

Cortes sent Guatemozin proposals of peace,

but the king had no intention of accepting them. Most of the day was frittered away in this manner. Finally, the Mexicans themselves opened hostilities. Cortes then warned them that he would reduce them to still narrower quarters. He sent Alvarado to make an attack at one point while he made an attack at another. They went on foot, for it was impossible for cavalry to enter this quarter of the city. Hopelessly, but still bravely, the Mexicans resisted. Great numbers of them were killed and made prisoners, while the remainder were forced into still straighter quarters. It was in vain for the Spaniards to reprove their allies. They had let loose a wild beast, and could not restrain it from wholesale cruelty.

The Mexicans had now no resting place but on the bodies of the dead. The people were willing enough to lay down their arms. The matter lay only with Guatemozin and a few chiefs. On the following day, the Mexicans, seeing the great Spanish and Indian army arrayed against them, called upon the Spaniards to bring Cortes there immediately. Cortes had now become sceptical as to the Mexican desire for peace. But he went to a canal on the opposite side of which stood the haggard warriors of the enemy. A parley ensued. The Mexicans said that Guatemo-

zin was afraid to risk a conference with the Spaniards. Cortes assured them with the most solemn oaths that he would do the king no harm. But nothing came of it. Two Mexican nobles played the farce of taking some bread and cherries from an enormous bag and eating. So persistently did they try to hide their own misery.

Making another effort, Cortes sent a prisoner of rank to Guatemozin with offers of peace. It is said that the exasperated king ordered him killed when he delivered his message. At any rate, the only answer that Cortes got was the war-cries of the Mexicans.

"Death is all we wish," they cried. With that they let fly a shower of arrows and stones, and began to fight more furiously than ever. One Mexican, who carried a Spanish sword on the end of a long pole, killed a horse with it. But it was not hard for the Spaniards to repay them dearly for this.

The next day the Spaniards rode through the city, not seeking this miserable warfare with dying men. Having waited in vain for any offers of peace, Cortes rode up to an entrenchment, and addressed some chiefs whom he had known of old.

"Since you see yourselves," said he, "in such

a desperate situation and know well that, if I pleased, in one hour none of you would be left alive, why will not your king come and confer with me, on my promising not to injure him? If he will but seek peace, you shall all be well received and treated by me."

"We are fully conscious of our hopeless condition," said the Mexicans with tears in their eyes. "We will go and speak with the king, and return instantly." They soon came back and said:—"As it is already evening, Guatemozin can not come now to confer with you. But, in the middle of next day, he will meet you in the market place, at all events."

The Spaniards then returned to camp. Cortes caused a carpeted seat to be prepared in the building in the centre of the square, for the reception of Guatemozin and his nobles. He also ordered a repast to be prepared. In the morning the besieging armies moved as usual into the city Cortes cautioned his men to be on their guard, lest the Mexicans should yet meditate some treachery. Arrived at the square, Cortes sent a message to Guatemozin reminding him of his appointment. But Guatemozin did not come. Five of the principal chiefs of the city came in his stead, and excused the king, saying that he

dared not confer with the Spaniards. Cortes feasted these ambassadors, and the voracious way in which they ate testified to the privation they had undergone. After they had eaten, Cortes sent them back to Guatemozin with a present of food and another request that he would meet him. In two hours they returned with a present of fine mantles from their king and the news that he would by no means come, and did not wish to confer with the Spaniards. Cortes answered that he could see no reason why the king should fear to come before him, when he saw that he treated his caciques well, though he knew them to be the chief promoters of the war. He begged them to return again, and bring about an interview with Guatemozin, if possible, for it would be greatly to his interest. They consented, and promised to bring his answer on the following day.

Early the next morning the Mexican caciques came to the Spanish camp. They asked Cortes to go again to the market place, where Guatemozin would meet them. Cortes immediately mounted his horse, and, taking the Spaniards with him; ordered his allies to remain without the city, for in case peace was concluded, he would not want them. He was determined to conclude the

matter in some way to-day. He ordered Alvarado to be in readiness, and gave Sandoval and his men charge of the little fleet, that everything might be prepared for the last blow, in case the Mexicans still held out. Cortes galloped through the city into the market-place, but found no one there. For three or four hours, the restless cavaliers waited here, but Guatemozin did not appear. They were deceived again. Cortes sent for the allies and Alvarado's division. Sandoval was ordered to attack the Mexicans by water. In a short time this poor remains of Mexico was surrounded on all sides. The Spaniards and allies sprang over the few ditches and entrenchments that remained to the Mexicans. It was not an attack, for the starving inhabitants were now destitute of stones, arrows, or darts. Soon the piercing cries and lamentations of women and children filled the air. Even the stern hearts of the Spaniards were moved. They would fain have put a stop to the indiscriminate slaughter which their allies carried on. Cortes says they had more to do to restrain their allies, than to fight the enemy; for, he declares, "the people of this country are addicted to a cruelty exceeding what had ever been known in any generation." They not only attempted to restrain them from cruelty, but

from carrying off wholesale the rich plunder which had been gathered together in this quarter. But, as Cortes says, they were but a few hundred men, while the allies amounted to thousands. A hundred and fifty thousand, he states it. According to him, forty thousand souls were killed or made prisoners on this day. Still the city was not yet taken: still the survivors held out. The pestilential odor from the dead bodies which had lain for a long time in the streets of this quarter of the city, drove the Spaniards back. They withdrew until the following day.

The thirteenth of August, 1521, dawned. Cortes made his dispositions for a final attack. He ordered Sandoval, with the brigantines, to enter a small basin of water within the quarter of the city where the Mexicans still were. Taking with him three field-pieces, he met Alvarado within the ruined city. The land forces were to drive the enemy toward the brigantines, whose captains were ordered to keep a strict lookout for Guatemozin; for, if he were captured the war would be at an end. Before beginning operations, Cortes ascended a building overlooking the Aztec quarter, and addressed some of the principal men, "Why does your lord refuse to come to me," said he, "when you are reduced to such ex-

tremities? There is no good cause why you should all perish. Go and call him and have no fears."

They went, and, after some time returned, with a warrior of great importance, Guatemozin's main counsellor. Cortes treated him with the greatest kindness, and endeavored to persuade him that there was no cause for fear.

"Guatemozin will by no means come into your presence," answered the warrior. "He prefers rather to die. This determination grieves me much, but you will have to do your will."

"Very well," answered Cortes, "return to your friends, and prepare for the war which I will continue until your destruction is completed."

While the conference went on, many of the Mexicans were crowded together on piles of the dead, and some were swimming about and drowning in the water, still defended by Mexican canoes. The sufferings of the people were so excessive that many of the poor creatures sought refuge with the Spaniards, plunging into the water in their eagerness to reach them. Cortes stationed Spaniards at various points, to prevent, as far as possible, the allies from murdering these wretched creatures, but it was of little avail. Evening was coming on before Cortes could make up his mind

to fight the warriors, still remaining in their pestilential quarter, vainly trying to hide their misery Cortes ordered the cannon to be leveled at them. But the allies were more effective than cannon. The last charge was sounded, the last attack made. Some of the wretched Mexicans were drowned; some perished at the hands of the allies; some fell into the power of the more merciful Spaniards. The brigantines pushed into the small basin of water, and broke through the Mexican canoes, the warriors in them daring to offer no resistance.

Guatemozin was determined not to place himself in the hands of the men who had offered insults to Montezuma in the height of his power. Sandoval with his fleet was approaching, destroying the houses as he proceeded. Already he was nearing Guatemozin's quarters. The chief with his wife and children, and his principal nobles, hastened into some large pirogues, reserved for the purpose, and began their flight across the lake. They made for the shore in various directions. Informed of this movement, Sandoval ordered his vessels to the pursuit. A captain named Garci Holquin commanded the swiftest sailer of the fleet. He marked a large pirogue distinguished from the others by a peculiar awning and ornaments. He

bore down upon this boat. When he neared her he made signs to the crew to "bring to." But they only pulled the harder for shore. He then ordered his cross-bow-men and musketeers to take aim at her. The people in the boat made signs not to fire. The Spaniards sprang on board and captured Guatemozin and his family and attendants. Holquin showed the king the greatest respect and feasted him on the poop of his vessel.

Being informed of the capture of the king, Cortes ordered him to be brought to him. Meantime he prepared for a state reception, as best he could, by making a seat, laying down cloths and mantles, and preparing refreshments. When the royal prisoner appeared, Cortes moved forward to meet him, and embraced him.

"Malinche," said Guatemozin with tears in his eyes, "I have done my duty in the defence of my kingdom and my people. My efforts have failed, and I am now brought before you a prisoner." He laid his hand on a poniard which Cortes wore at his side. "Strike me to the heart," said he.

The war was ended. The country was conquered. The kingdom of Montezuma and the region about it was henceforward New Spain.

After seventy-five days of siege and incessant

battle, Mexico was taken; but she was no longer Mexico, she was but a heap of ruins lapped by the waters of the lake. As a fitting end to this great tragedy, the fall of a people, there was a frightful thunder storm during the night that followed. But so deafened had the Spaniards become by the din of battle, that Bernal Diaz asserts that they could not hear the thunder. He says it was as though they had been for an hour in a steeple, with the bells ringing about their ears.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CONCLUSION.

MEXICO rose on its ruins, a European city Again the central square was surrounded by fine buildings. But now a great cathedral took the place of the pyramid temple of Huitzilopotchli. The foundations of this Christian temple were laid with the broken images of the old deities. Where the ancient palace once stood, Cortes reared him a palace of hewn stone, in which seven thousand beams of cedar are said to have been used. It afterwards became the palace of the viceroys of Mexico, while Cortes' descendants, the dukes of Monte Leone, erected another on the very site of Montezuma's palace. And who rebuilt this beautiful city within less than four years? Surely not the handful of Spaniards who were most of them hidalgos, or gentlemen's sons, and couldn't tarnish their honor with any work but that of fighting. The natives of the country, many of them the very allies who had so carefully riveted the yoke around their own

necks, toiled to rebuild Mexico, as the Mexicans had predicted. They became slaves, for the adventurers did not go there to work, and must enrich themselves in some way. The home government objected to the giving away of the inhabitants with the land, but her colonies were bound to enrich themselves, and the royal revenues from them, were certainly very comfortable.

A good monk who was an eye-witness at the rebuilding of Mexico says that the natives suffered greatly from what he calls the "ten plagues of New Spain." These were, the small pox, the slaughter during the conquest, a great famine which took place after the capture of the city, the Indian and negro overseers, the excessive tributes and services demanded from them, the gold mines, the rebuilding of Mexico, the making of slaves to work in the mines, the transport service for the mines, and the dissensions among the Spaniards themselves.

Mexico stands to-day, a beautiful city, but she no longer stands in the water. The Spaniards soon deprived New Spain of her fine forests. Springs and streams dried up in the scorching sun, and Lake Tezcuco retired within its banks, leaving a broad margin of barren land, white with salt deposits, and Mexico high and dry.

And what became of Guatemozin? The Spaniards had been much disappointed with the treasure they found in Mexico. It amounted only to the "paltry sum of three hundred and eighty thousand crowns." There were all sorts of mur murs among the soldiers. Cortes was accuse of having taken "one fifth as general and the other fifth as king." The white wall of the Indian building which he occupied was scribbled all over with libelous squibs. The mildest of them ran—

> "Alas! how sad a soul I bear,
> Until I see what is my share.

Cortes wrote under these scrawls, "A white wall, the paper of fools." The next morning, "and for truths," was added. Finally the thing became so scandalous that Father Olmedo told Cortes that he must put an end to it, which he accordingly did.

The avaricious Spaniards were sure that Guatemozin had thrown rich treasure into the lake. Some of them, among whom was the royal treasurer, proposed that Guatemozin should be tortured until he confessed where he had hidden his riches.

Cortes refused to do this after the promises of protection which he had made the unfortunate

king. It was then insinuated that Cortes was reserving the knowledge of this secret for himself, that he might secure the treasure. Goaded by the accusations of his men, Cortes finally consented to this act of cruelty, which will always be a blot upon his name. Guatemozin and the cacique of Tacuba, who had been captured with him, were put to the torture. In the agony of suffering, the cacique of Tacuba is said to have appealed to Guatemozin, for permission to confess what he knew.

"Am I taking my pleasure in my bath!" answered the brave young Mexican.

All that they could wring from them was that some treasure had been thrown into the water. At last, out of pure shame, Cortes released them. Divers were taken to the part of the lake designated in the confession, and the bottom was diligently searched. Some small pieces of gold were recovered, but the avarice of the Spaniards was by no means satisfied. A large wheel of gold, probably representing the calendar, like those which Montezuma have given to Cortes, was afterwards found in a deep basin of water in the gardens of Guatemozin's palace. The Spaniards had to content themselves with this.

Guatemozin was kept a prisoner by Cortes

The conqueror with his small force, had more than once to suppress revolts in distant provinces, and was continually in dread of a rising among the whole people, under the new order of things. On one of his journeys to a distant province, Cortes, having his distinguished captive always with him, discovered, as he thought, some indications of a plot on the part of Guatemozin. There was undoubtedly a plan for rising among the Indians. Guatemozin, when examined, confessed this, but denied that he had any part in it, while the cacique of Tacuba, his companion in suffering, said that they had committed no further treason, than to say that death would be preferable to the life they led on this hard march. But Cortes chose to consider them guilty, and sentenced them to death.

"Malinche," said Guatemozin, "now I find in what your false promises have ended. Better that I had fallen by my own hands, than to have trusted myself to your power, in my city of Mexico. Why do you thus unjustly take my life?" The unfortunate princes were hung to a great tree.

And the conqueror himself; what reward did he get from the king for whom he had gained a new kingdom? And did he "live happy ever

after," according to the ending of the old stories? He founded a noble house; he became the possessor of immense estates in New Spain, and lived like a small monarch himself. His first wife died shortly after her arrival in Mexico, and he married a lady of noble descent. He presented her with some beautiful Mexican jewels, which the queen is said to have envied her. On his first return to Spain, he was received with all the honors befitting a great conqueror. But his life was no more peaceful than that of Columbus. The vice-royalty of the new kingdom was not given to Cortes. It was not the policy of the Spanish government to place this office in the hands of a great military captain, and especially one who had shown himself so capable of slipping away from authority. He was kindly permitted to fit out voyages of discovery along the Pacific coast in search of that magot of discoverers, a northwest passage to the East Indies, at his own expense. He involved himself in debt in these enterprises, and, on his second return to Spain, was received with coldness at court, and suddenly died there.

Few monuments now remain of the days of Montezuma. The great pyramid of Cholula still stands, overgrown with vegetation and surmounted

by a chapel. An immense circular stone, weighing more than twenty-four tons and known as Montezuma's watch, is worked into the wall of the cathedral at Mexico. It is carved with symbolical figures, and is probably one of those calendars, of which some were made of gold. From the nature of the rock, it must have been transported some forty or fifty miles by men alone. The descendants of the Mexicans are now free from slavery, and they are said to still pay honor to those among them who belong to caciques' families, in contradistinction to their vassals, showing the strength of their old customs. More than one noble Mexican house boasts of the blood of the unhappy Montezuma.

THE END.

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